00095813

00095813

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 31 October, 2019

TWO QUEENS

CAROLINE MATILDA of DENMARK & MARIE ANTOINETTE of FRANCE

95813

A Historical Novel

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF BARON SIMOLIN

KYA-a-60

WITH A PREFACE

BY

F. MAX MÜLLER

Professor of Comparative Philology in the University of Oxford

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

London

SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO LIM^P

NEW YORK: MACMILLAN & CO

1896

God
823
Sim/Two
95813

BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
FROME, AND LONDON.

Preface

COUNT AXEL DE FERSEN, in his interesting Journal, 1791–1810, extracts from which and from his correspondence were published in 1877 by Baron R. M. de Klinckonström (Paris, Firmin Didot et Cie), states that at the time of the flight of Louis XVI. to Varennes, the Queen, Marie Antoinette, handed him a portefeuille with her papers. These are his words, dated November 9, 1792 :—

"*On voulut m'engager à brûler le portefeuille qui contenait les papiers de la reine, mais je n'en fis rien. Je le plaçai, avec les miens, dans la voiture de* SIMOLIN. *J'avais résolu la veille de les remettre à Lord Elgin, pour être envoyés en Angleterre, mais l'insurrection d'Anvers me fit changer d'avis*" (Pref. p. vii.).

The name of Simolin reminded me of an old friend, who had been the friend of my father also, Baron, afterwards Count SIMOLIN, a Russian, or rather a Kurland nobleman, the son of the Baron Simolin here mentioned by Count de Fersen. My

friend often spoke of his father, and the important services which he had rendered to two Queens, the Queen Marie Antoinette of France and the Queen Caroline Matilda of Denmark. He was in possession of many curious diaries and letters, and fully intended to publish them. Towards the end of his life, however, he changed his mind, and decided on working up these memoirs into a kind of biographical novel. Old age and various pressing duties delayed the execution of this plan, and he at last handed over all his manuscript materials to G. Hesekiel, who brought out a book in German under the title of *Zwei Königinnen und ein Simolin*. It was never known that, so far from being a mere novel, the principal events of it were real history; and though its importance for an accurate knowledge of the tragic events at Paris and Copenhagen cannot compare with the Memoirs of Count Axel de Fersen, this little novel seemed to me worthy of becoming more widely known. I therefore persuaded a friend to translate it into English, and I feel confident that it will be read with interest by all who are acquainted from other sources with the events related in it.

F. MAX MÜLLER.

Oxford, 1896.

Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	SULTRY WEATHER . . .	1
II.	THE THUNDERBOLT . .	31
III.	SUNSET	64
IV.	THICK CLOUDS GATHERING .	99
V.	THE STORM BREAKS . .	124
VI.	THE MORNING DAWNS . .	150

TWO QUEENS

Chapter I

SULTRY WEATHER

BUT a few years ago the visitor to Copenhagen might still have seen in the Ostergaden the old, red, gabled house which, in 1772, was inhabited by Sir Robert Keith, at that time the British Minister at the Danish Court. It was a cold evening in January of that year, the crisp snow crackled under the feet of the passengers who hurried through the streets, and no one stood still, even for a moment, to listen to the magnificent voice, which made itself clearly heard, even though

the windows were protected by thick wooden shutters, closing so tightly that no gleam of light could be seen through them.

It was a woman's voice, but of such compass and strength that it was like a mighty stream, bearing all before it in its course. The room in which the singer sat was by no means large, and looked even smaller than it was, for a huge, old-fashioned cabinet and a broad oak table, round which stood several comfortable arm-chairs, with short twisted legs and well-stuffed backs, gave it a crowded appearance. The great stove, an edifice in itself, jutted far out into the room, and formed on one side a cosy corner, in which stood a couple of Chinese lacquer tables with spindle legs, an open pianoforte, an oval mirror, a pedestal supporting a huge white vase of Vieux Saxe porcelain, some chairs and footstools, and various ornamental pieces of furniture.

It was the warmest spot in the whole gabled house, and Sir Robert's wife had

arranged it as her boudoir; though her husband thought it very unsuitable for his wife's boudoir to have no wall of separation from his dining-room. An Englishwoman would not have tolerated such an arrangement; but Lady Helen was a daughter of Fingal, born in the barren Highlands of Scotland, and educated in a French convent, and therefore scarcely knew—at least, from her own experience—what was thought "suitable" in England. "I am a Campbell," she would often say, "of the Catholic branch." She had no intention of hiding her own faith, having long become a Protestant, from conviction. She only wished to emphasize her descent, for there are many Campbells, descendants all of them of Diarmid, but the Catholic branch claims to be the elder. Still, it sounded strange in many ears when so zealous a Protestant proudly proclaimed her Catholic origin.

Lady Helen was by no means a beauty: she was small and thin, but her face was pleasant and clever; her mouth

showed decision of character, and her grey eyes had a soft, friendly expression. Her age was about thirty, or a little more. She wore a morning dress of brown silk trimmed with fur, but evidently felt the cold, even in her cosy corner, for her arm-chair was drawn as close as possible to the stove. She formed the sole audience of the singer, who was seated at the little piano, a short distance from Lady Helen.

"Your voice is far more beautiful and powerful, my dear Renira," said Lady Helen, at a pause in the song, "than we expected in the convent. What a delight it would be to Mother Mary Magdalene, and the good old Professor, the German — oh! what was his name? — if they could hear you now! They must both be dead long ago; they were very old, even in those days."

Renira let her long, white fingers glide lightly over the keys, as she sang that French love song of the fourteenth century, generally ascribed to the famous Count Gaston de Foix,—

"The mountains above,
How high they appear, woe me!
How high they appear, woe me!
They prevent me from seeing
Where tarries my child, woe me!
Where tarries my child, woe me!
Oh! could I but find her,
And hasten to meet her, woe me!
And hasten to meet her, woe me!
I would swim the deep waters,
E'en though they drown me, woe me!
E'en though they drown me, woe me!"

As the last passionate cry of longing resounded through the room, Lady Helen wiped her eyes and said,—

"I like those simple songs the best. Sir Robert is cruel enough to say I know nothing about music; yet I find a true pleasure in such little songs, whilst he does nothing but argue with people over brilliant and difficult music."

The singer left the piano; she was tall and slight, with a long, pale, refined face, as still and firm as marble, but lighted up by a pair of dark, expressive eyes. She was richly dressed in the fashion of the day, and her hair most carefully arranged; over her shoulders,

which, according to the prevailing mode, were bare, she had thrown a rich fur collar, almost as large as a small mantle.

With a graceful, noiseless motion, Renira glided towards her friend, and, taking her hand, spoke to her in a voice so soft and caressing that it was difficult to believe that powerful stream of song could have flowed from the same source as these gentle, loving tones.

"You understand what the music means, my dear Helen?" whispered Renira, looking wistfully at her friend.

"What did your song mean, then?" asked Lady Helen, with a keen, searching glance.

"My own love sorrows," said Renira softly, but bravely, as she bore Lady Helen's look without change of countenance.

"Then it is true?" said Helen eagerly.

"Is what true?" asked Renira, as softly and wistfully as before.

"We are told," answered Helen, "that you had been forced to leave the Court

of the German Princess, who was so devoted to you, because you had inspired a young man, in a lower position in life, with a strong affection for you. Forgive me, dear Renira, if I pain you."

"You do not pain me, my dear Helen," said Renira; "but let me tell you how it really was. I have only waited for a quiet moment to tell you all, as is but due to the friendship between us. What you were told is true, but it is not the whole truth; and you must know the whole, to be just in your feelings towards me."

Lady Helen placed her arm round her friend, and drew her towards her. She was but a few years older than Renira; but there was something motherly in the action which evidently touched the younger friend.

"You know," began Renira, after a short pause, and speaking as quietly and dispassionately as if she had been talking of a third person, her eyes alone betraying her feelings—"you know, my dear Helen, unless you have forgotten it

during the twelve years we have been separated, that I have neither father nor mother, no family, no country. I have been told that my mother was an Englishwoman of high birth, but her name has never been disclosed. Of my father I never heard anything. I only know I am legitimate; and yet I am assured I shall and must never learn who were my parents. Where is my native land? I was born on board of a Russian frigate, in the roadstead of Belem—therefore in Portugal; then, as you know, I was brought up in a French convent, and afterwards a German Princess took me to her Court as one of her maids of honour. It was never a home to me. It is true the Princess was very kind, and the 'English girl,' as they called me, was for a short time an object of envy to some of the courtiers. Here and there I met with kindness, but it could not brighten my lot, oppressed as I felt by the dark secret which surrounded my life. Oh, my dear Helen! it was a sad time, for my heart yearned

for love, for friendship, for a home. I cannot tell you how I thirsted for affection—and I had no one to love. You happy creatures, who have always had parents, and brothers and sisters, friends, house and family, home and country, surrounding you with love—you can have no idea of the misery of my life ever since I ceased to be a child, since I left the convent, since I learnt about myself. But God took pity on my forlorn condition. He sent me a friend—a young scholar—whose acquaintance I made by accident, as one calls it. Love of music was our first bond of union. We became friends, then more than friends; and I was happy — entirely happy. The father of my lover is, or was, a well-known man of letters. In his house I found sisters—the sisters of my lover, my affianced husband. I felt it was my duty to tell the Princess of my happy prospects, as she had always been so good to me. She listened to my story with deep feeling, and then said, 'I am afraid, my dear child, that

your marriage with a young man of the middle classes will never be allowed. However deserving young Wappäus may be, you will be forced to break off this engagement, though I will do all that lies in my power to further your marriage; but you must prepare to be disappointed. I must tell you this, much as it grieves me, for I have always loved you.'

"So spoke the only person who up to that time had ever shown me any kindness. My *fiancé* tried to persuade me to marry him at once, but I would not. How often I have regretted this since! One night I was awakened from sleep, and summoned to the old Princess. I found her in a state of great agitation. She kissed me over and over again, and then said, 'I cannot help you, my dear child—you are recalled! They might, at least, have shown more consideration for me! You have to leave at once! A lady has arrived to travel back with you to England! May God watch over you!' The Princess prepared to give

me the parting kiss, but I tore myself away, declaring I would not go—that I must stay with her. 'You must obey, dear Renira,' said the Princess. 'Remember it is your mother who recalls you, and I have no power to protect you. You will only endanger young Wappäus' position if you refuse to go.' I looked inquiringly at the old Princess, who was evidently feeling deeply for me; and she added significantly, 'Your mother will not hear of such a marriage. It is best to tell you so at once, that you may be very careful what you do. It would not be difficult to take young Wappäus as a recruit, under a feigned name, or send him to some distant country; and you would have made the man you love miserable without helping yourself. Be an obedient daughter. God's blessing is on obedient children. I can say so from my own experience.' I had nothing to say. Resistance would have been useless. The idea of endangering Wappäus had subdued me. I was helpless,

and could only yield. On returning to my room, I found a lady there waiting for me. In a kindly way she begged me to follow her, as my boxes were all packed, and the carriage was waiting. I was taken utterly by surprise. Before I really came to my senses, I was in the carriage, with the strange lady by my side, and a gentleman on the opposite seat. They were both of them full of consideration, but it was more than I could bear. I sank back senseless. When I came to myself, I was in Rotterdam. Weeks had rolled by whilst I lay prostrate with nervous fever. Another lady—not the one who had conveyed me from the Princess — had watched over and nursed me. We went to England. I passed rather more than a year in London, and became acquainted with many people, but I never heard a word from or about my mother. I was first told last autumn that I was to go to the Danish Court. Queen Caroline Matilda had asked her mother to send her a lady-in-waiting. You know that

I came here by Hanover and Hamburg. I have secretly written many letters to my *fiancé*, and some of them must surely have reached him, though it is easy to understand why I have received no answer. I know that he is seeking me, and I feel that he will succeed in finding me. It is this thought that keeps me quiet, even contented; and I am indeed fortunate, my dear Helen, to have found in the wife of the English Minister here my old convent companion, who still cares a little for me."

The friends kissed each other, and exchanged promises of lasting affection.

"And have you never made any discoveries about your mother, whose arbitrary will has exercised such an influence on your life?" asked Lady Helen.

"My discoveries," said Renira, "soon came to an end. The lady in whose house I lived in London told me very openly that she had received the commission to look after me from an eminent banking firm. I managed to see the head partner of this house; he expressed his

sympathy, and promised to give me the desired information by letter, if he could get leave to do so. After some weeks he wrote telling me that my father—my father, observe, not my mother—had settled an annuity of £400 on me; that he watched over and would always provide for me till the time came when he could acknowledge me as his daughter, but that he strictly forbade me to make any further inquiries. With this I had to be satisfied."

"You were specially commended to Sir Robert by the Secretary of State, who also, I think, wrote about you directly to Queen Caroline Matilda," said Lady Helen, who sat for a moment lost in thought, but then continued eagerly: "I am afraid, my dear Renira, they mean to use you as a political tool. You have certainly not been sent here for your own advantage at a moment when an English Princess, in the midst of a Court torn by factions and undermined by the basest intrigues, has to play a part harder than ever fell to a young queen on any throne.

I would never let a daughter or sister of mine enter this Court. Unfortunately I have no power to stop my friend, whom I pity deeply."

"May I not become an instrument, even though but a very weak one, to save this unhappy Princess?" said Renira hopefully. "They will not venture to propose anything very extraordinary to me, as I receive my instructions directly from Sir Robert Keith, the high-minded husband of my dear friend."

"Oh!" answered Helen eagerly; "I do not pity you for what you may be called on to do here, but for what you must hear and see, and possibly endure. In their intense animosity they do not even spare the Queen, the sister of the King of England. Still less will they spare the English lady-in-waiting, whom they hate already before they have even seen her."

"All you say is only a proof of your affection for me, dear Helen," answered Renira promptly; "but you could not persuade me to draw back, even if the

Queen had not already folded me in her arms, and kissed me, and consecrated me to her service with bitter tears. I love to think it must be my unknown father or mother who sent me here."

Before Lady Helen could answer, they heard the house-door open and close again, whilst a commanding voice sounded in the entrance hall. A few moments later Sir Robert Keith entered the room, and saluted the ladies with that union of soldierly frankness and social polish so suitable to the military diplomatist. After the preliminary greetings Sir Robert took an arm-chair, and said, with a poor attempt at hilarity, "Let us to business, dear ladies; and as I am speaking now as the Minister of King George, I must beg my dear wife to lend me her support in the matter we have to discuss. I have had a private interview with the Queen Caroline Matilda, and she wishes you, my young friend, to be formally presented at the Court Ball to-morrow. The wife of General von Gähler will have

the honour of presenting you; you will be officially appointed the day after to-morrow, and on Sunday you will begin your waiting. I feel it is highly important to establish some regular means of communication between the Queen and myself, for I fear the day is not far distant when no other support will be left to the sister of King George but me, her poor servant; and God grant it may be in my power to help this unhappy Queen."

The General was silent for a time, and it was easy to see how deeply he was moved by the thought of the dangers surrounding the Queen, to whom he was devotedly attached.

"Has anything in particular happened?" asked Lady Helen.

"Nothing in particular," answered Sir Robert gravely; "but in spite of the bitter cold, the atmosphere at Court and in the town is sultry, and betokens thunder. The hatred to Struensee seems to have reached its highest point, and I fear these over-charged clouds must break

into a storm, and I am terribly alarmed for the Queen."

"But what can happen to her?" cried Lady Helen anxiously. "I have never heard you speak so apprehensively."

"Anything may happen to the Queen," answered Sir Robert gloomily. "You know of what the Queen-Mother is capable. But let us leave that now. I have the Queen's orders to make her new lady-in-waiting acquainted with the state of affairs here; for, if Miss Renira is anxious to be of service to the Queen, she must know everything."

Renira silently bowed her head, and the General began his narration:—

"It is six years since the Queen arrived here. She was then only fifteen years of age, though in appearance quite grown up; not beautiful, but attractive from her exquisite figure, her brilliant complexion, and her wonderfully fair hair which glistened like silver, and even more from her youthful grace and the sweetness of her disposition. The Queen has been well educated. She speaks English, French,

and German, and has learnt Danish easily; but she was still a child in thought, an innocent child in character.

"This sweet, pure child of fifteen years old became the wife of Christian VII. of Denmark. Do you know what Christian VII. was when the Queen came here? I will tell you. This eighteen-years-old King was a boy in intellect, but at the same time a thoroughly depraved libertine, an utterly stupefied, worn-out sensualist, incapable of a single serious thought, and possessed by a wild love of pleasure. And how was this possible at his age? You must hear that, too. It was because his stepmother, Queen Juliana Maria—curses on this Princess of Wolfenbüttel!—had with satanic cunning taken care that the King, even at a tender age, should indulge himself in the most unbridled excesses. I cannot enter into particulars with ladies; suffice it to say that this worthy stepmother, who had tried in vain to poison the Prince as a child, tried, and not in vain, to poison the youth—what am I saying?—the boy,

in mind and body, by surrounding him with temptations of every sort, inciting his fiery temperament to the most disgusting excesses. Thus she inoculated him with the seeds of death, and hoped to prevent him from marrying, that he might die young and childless, and leave the throne of Denmark and Norway free for her own son, the deformed and silly Prince Frederick. It is needless to say that this dreadful hypocrite at Friedensborg—it is there Juliana Maria lives—was from the first a dangerous enemy of the crowned English child, whom she tried to entice to some false step by surrounding her with intrigues; and she soon succeeded in producing an estrangement between the young couple. It was easy to do so, for the King had no respect for the feelings of his young wife, and his profligacy grievously wounded her pure mind. The dangerous intrigues of the Wolfenbüttel Princess were, however, counteracted by other intrigues, not perhaps altogether noble; but still a reconciliation was effected between the

royal couple, and the fury of the step-mother knew no bounds when the Crown Prince Frederick was born in 1768. Her hopes were apparently destroyed by the birth of this child; but it was sickly, and Juliana Maria therefore did not consider her fearful game as wholly lost. It was at her instigation that Christian undertook that journey through Germany, Holland, England, and France, which not only cost unheard-of sums, but exhausted the last remnants of his mental and physical strength. Since his return, signs of mental malady have developed rapidly. King Christian will become more and more, what he now is partly, weak in mind, mostly melancholy, but if excited, madly violent; he must be watched, attended to, and amused like a child.

"The King was accompanied on that journey by a young physician, Dr. John Frederick Struensee, a doctor from Altona, born at Halle on the Saale, where his father, who later on became General Superintendent in Schleswig, was preacher

at the Church of St. Ulrich. This highly gifted young man had become absolutely necessary to the King; he came here as the King's physician and friend, and soon became the physician and confidant of the Queen. He used his influence with the best results; he effected an entire reconciliation between the King and the Queen; he took charge of the Crown Prince, and managed him so well that he soon became a strong, healthy child; and, in fact, he brought about as good a state of things in the royal house as was possible under the circumstances. The King is now devoted to his wife; her society is the one bright star in his darkened lot, and the birth of the little Princess last autumn had so good an effect on him that people began to have hopes of his recovery, more especially as Struensee's regimen had also strengthened him physically. But Struensee told me at the time he did not share these hopes; the King would probably live to a good age, but he would never fully recover his

reason. Ah! had Struensee only been satisfied with his beneficent work as physician and confidential friend in the royal house, the poor Queen would have had, if not a happy, yet at least a quiet life, and, as a mother, not an entirely joyless one. But I will not blame him: it was his destiny! If the Queen was to save the weak-minded King from the hands of his furious enemy, who, had she triumphed, would at once have threatened the royal children, she must reign for him; she must assert her royal power to prevent this power being used against herself. She seized the reins, but not to govern herself—she felt too weak for that—but to place them in the hands of Struensee. In the space of a few months the former doctor of Altona became Prime Minister of Denmark—at first in fact only, but then in name also. This might have proved a turning-point in the affairs of the kingdom, but Struensee was completely intoxicated by his position; the upstart lost his head, and began hastily to remodel the whole

kingdom, heaping new laws and new arrangements one on the other.

"Many of his schemes were excellent, but they seemed bad from the haste and want of consideration with which they were carried out. Economy was introduced everywhere, whilst he and his friends spent large sums on his almost princely establishment. Thus he has made himself enemies in every direction; a thousand injured interests cry out against him, and the murmurs of mortified selfishness and endangered gains aid in strengthening an opposition which one must allow to be on some points justifiable. A tremendous coalition has been formed against Struensee: the Church is furious at the strong hand with which the Minister has meddled in their affairs; they call him an atheist, and I do not myself believe he is anything better; the Army and Navy are hostile to him, and not the officers only, because he has abolished the guards, and introduced other unheard-of changes; the patriotic party storm against a foreign

Minister who can only give his laws and orders in German; the aristocracy are offended by the pride of the Premier; respectable people despise him as a libertine—in fact, there is hardly a man in this country who, either for a good or a bad reason, does not hate him. And against this alarming coalition of hatred Struensee has no support but a mad King and a young, inexperienced Queen, who is so infatuated in her belief in his talents as a statesman that she is exceedingly offended with any one who makes the least remark against her favourite. He has no friends, for even the lowest Court officials hate him, because he cut down their incomes; and I begin to suspect that Count Enevold Brandt, who up to now has appeared his friend, is intriguing against him. I heard directly from one of the nobles, Count Schack Karl von Rantzau, to whom Struensee owed his appointment as Physician to the King, that he hates his former *protégé*, because of the airs with which he treats him. You can

well imagine, Miss Renira, that in this state of things the Wolfenbüttel Princess is not idle. Her minions stir up the flames of hatred in all directions; it is from her that emanate those shameful reports which degrade the Queen in the eyes of the people, which attribute to her an unlawful passion for Struensee, and the most abandoned conduct. I know these are lies, but unfortunately I must own that the Queen is not careful enough; in her perfect innocence she has done things which give a pretence for these calumnies. On this point the new lady-in-waiting will have to be on her guard. You understand me?"

Renira made a sign of assent, and the General continued: "In spite of all this, I should not feel afraid if Struensee were a true reformer, possessed with a sense of the greatness of his mission—if he were only a courageous, determined man; but he is not. He is a mere coward, who loses his head on the first determined show of opposition. It is very sad—the man has no courage. He is

constantly revoking his orders, and the people have found out that he is a coward. And now that they know that, they will not tolerate him much longer. Juliana Maria detests him, for it is his care as a physician that has made the Crown Prince strong and healthy, and has destroyed her son's hopes of the throne. Still her son might be Regent, if she could remove Struensee and Queen Caroline Matilda. I know that various officers, and even Count Rantzau himself, have had private meetings with Counsellor Guldberg, who is the confidant of Juliana Maria. In these meetings the storm has been brewed which now threatens to burst over us, and the approach of which so oppresses me. It lowers over all grades of society, over the Court itself, and we shall soon hear the first clap announcing that it has broken loose God save the poor young Queen! I have done all that lies in my power, and will continue to do so; but I fear the worst. I have, in my despatches, described the pressing danger; but they

can do but very little in England for the Queen, and yet I feel sure even her life is not safe. You, my dear confederate, must be always on the watch, and inform me at once, by letters written in English, of anything that happens at Court, if it appears to you in the least out of the regular course. My German servant will enter your service and keep up communication between us; and if the Queen of Denmark is threatened, the Minister of King George is here to protect the English Princess."

A deep silence followed Sir Robert's explanation, broken at last by Lady Helen, who exclaimed, almost crying, "And it is into this chaos of intrigue and hatred and wickedness that you are going to plunge my poor Renira! But cannot you persuade the Queen to dismiss Struensee?"

"To dismiss Struensee now," said Sir Robert, with an ironical smile, "would be to give him up to his enemies, and leave herself defenceless against the Queen-Mother. No! I see no way of

escape. Caroline Matilda is lost! And she has a foreboding of it. She still considers Struensee a great statesman and reformer, but she realizes that he is a coward: she saw in the outbreak on Christmas Eve how he lost his head, and wanted to yield everything. I think since then her feeling for him is only a feeling of pity. A woman like the Queen never respects a man who has no courage. Oh! this Struensee, this reformer, who is only brave behind his books, at his library table, how carelessly, how unconscionably has he conjured up the storm! God have mercy on him!"

Uttering these words with the deepest feeling, the General rose, and left the room.

He did not tell his wife and Renira that he had seen Struensee that same afternoon, and shown him the abyss on which he stood, offering him a large sum if he would resign his appointments and leave Denmark. Struensee seemed moved by his arguments, but ended by declaring that duty and honour obliged

him to stay at his post. The two ladies fully realized the danger as they talked over everything Sir Robert had said, and discussed together every matter that could be of use to the new lady-in-waiting in her difficult position.

Chapter II

THE THUNDERBOLT

THE fine suite of State apartments in the royal Palace of Copenhagen were bright with light and colour: the Court circular for January 16, 1772, had announced, "Bal paré in Domino," with right of entrance for the first nine grades of rank. The gala was as fully attended and as brilliant as ever; a large preponderance of female beauty added to the lustre of the Court, and no one who saw the crowds of bright faces would have imagined that this dazzling scene was but a veil thrown over the most violent passions.

The King, with his insignificant figure, his pale, sickly face and sad eyes, and with the listless expression he always

wore when neither excited nor frightened, was playing a game of quadrille with General von Gähler and his wife and Counsellor Struensee, an elder brother of the Prime Minister, to whom not even the most violent hatred could refuse the name of a man of honour, and the credit of being a most able financier. The Queen, just twenty-one years of age, was in the full bloom of her beauty. She wore a red toque sprinkled with diamonds in her fair hair, which was divided on each side into four curls. Her purple robe, cut very low, showed off her lovely shoulders and perfect bust; a double row of pearls surrounded her white throat; a small mantle of ermine lay lightly on the left shoulder; her lovely blue eyes sparkled; her ripe lips were like the red of the pomegranate; and her soft, fair face shone with the delicate bloom of a blush rose. The young Queen looked more lovely this evening than ever before, and the admiring looks of all were bent on her as she danced; and when, at once dignified

and gracious, she passed through the long suite of rooms, all tried to win a glance from her eyes, her blue, blue eyes.

She knew that she was surrounded by bitter enemies, and yet she danced and laughed with a light, happy heart. Caroline Matilda had forgotten all enmity, or rather she could not, she would not, believe in the enmity of these men, who surrounded her with admiration, vieing with each other for a friendly look, for a gracious word from her.

She was light-hearted, this poor crowned child; and who could blame her for it? She was so young, so beautiful, so lovable — and a Queen. She danced, and was happy. In a window of the large violet saloon, between the ball-room and the card-room, through which all the guests passed as they wandered from room to room, stood the English Minister, Sir Robert Keith, half hidden by the violet curtains. He had already observed that he was the only foreign Minister present: even Baron Sprengtporten, the Swedish Minister, the

only one of the diplomatic corps who was still on tolerably friendly terms with Struensee, had not appeared. Near the Colonel stood Renira Beauclerc, in a white silk dress, tall, pale, and still as a Greek statue. She had been presented; the King had spoken to her a farrago of nonsense, without any connection, as was his wont; the Queen had been most gracious, and then Renira had withdrawn, unnoticed by most people, for she was wholly wanting in that beauty which excites or commands attention. No one remarked her, and only the few who knew that she was to be lady-in-waiting to the Queen condescended to look at her, and that in no friendly manner. They declared the English girl to be *maussade*, and laughed at the foreigner, the new ornament of the Danish Court. Sir Robert Keith had shown Renira into the deep embrasure of the window, whilst he hurriedly whispered to her, "Do not make any remarks, and I will point out the Queen's chief enemies. Observe their

faces — one should always know one's enemies; and here comes, just at the right moment, the man whom I hold to be our most dangerous opponent. Do you see a little man opposite, with a sharp nose and white lips? How softly the hypocrite glides about, with his keen, penetrating eyes!—cringing to his superiors, brutally insolent to those below him. That is Owe Hoegh Guldberg, the Queen-Mother's right-hand—curse him! There must be some special reason for his presence here, for, as leader of the pietist party in Copenhagen, he abjures all Court festivities."

The General stopped suddenly as three ladies passed close by the window niche.

"Three ladies of the Court," he continued, when they were out of hearing. "The tallest, in a disgustingly low dress as usual, bold in speech and manners, is Madame von Eyben. Entirely devoted to Juliana Maria, she hates the Queen bitterly. The other two are insignificant girls: the fair one is Mdlle. von Thienen; the dark one, Mdlle. von Kalckreuth. I

am afraid that, without knowing it, they are both used by Madame von Eyben as spies upon the Queen. The old coxcomb who ambled past behind the ladies (he always smacks his lips as if he were tasting some dainty dish) is the Minister von der Osten, an experienced diplomatist, but not a man one can depend upon. Struensee made him Minister, and I bet the old Judas has already betrayed him. The giant there in uniform is Colonel von Koeller, a fine officer, but vain and passionate, and the creature of Count Rantzau. Since I found out that this rough soldier had had secret meetings with Guldberg, I have more than suspected that Count Rantzau is no stranger to the plots against the Queen."

At this moment Counsellor Struensee passed through the room. He seemed, as his thoughtful eyes wandered over the company, to be looking for some one; there was still something of the stiffness of the professor—a man of letters in his general appearance. As soon as

he espied the English Minister he came up to him, and, after greeting him and the young English lady-in-waiting in a friendly way, asked Sir Robert if he had seen Count Rantzau.

The Colonel said he had not.

"It is strange," continued Struensee, offering his snuff-box; "the Count never fails to appear at these festivities. This afternoon he called at my house, whilst I was out, and begged that I would go to him at once; but when I got home there was only just time to dress, and I felt sure I should meet him here, as the Count made such a point of seeing me."

"I would go now and see the Count," said Sir Robert anxiously, for something made him feel that Count Rantzau's visit was of great significance.

The Counsellor, who kept aloof from all the intrigues around him, looked earnestly at the English Minister, and then said ingenuously, "You are right, Sir Robert; it may be of importance to my brother, who, as I hear, has not been

for some time on good terms with the Count. Thank you for your advice."

He bowed and moved on, with a thoughtful expression. Alas! as it was already so late, he postponed his visit to the next morning, when it would be no longer of any avail!

"I am not mistaken," whispered the Colonel to Renira; "on one point Rantzau is very like his former *protégé*, Struensee: he is an old conspirator, but he loses courage at the moment of action. I suspect he has lost it now. O God! if this proved our salvation!—if this plot failed! And yet it would not help us; a victory would only make this unfortunate Struensee more insolent and foolish."

The Colonel had hit on the very truth, for Rantzau, when he failed in finding Counsellor Struensee, returned to his house and went to bed, expecting still to see the brother of the Prime Minister, to whom he meant to divulge the whole plot. Almost at the same moment in which Counsellor Struensee was asking Keith about Count Rantzau Bering-

skiold, General Commissary for War, a grandson of the famous navigator, Vitus Bering, standing within a few yards of Keith, bent over the shoulder of Colonel von Koeller, and whispered in his ear, "We must not reckon on Rantzau; he has just sent me word that he is in bed with a sudden attack of gout."

"Let the Count know," said Koeller angrily, "that he must come; if he can't walk, he must be carried. I shall send twelve men of the Holstein regiment to fetch him if he is not there to time."

This determined threat of the bluff soldier saved the plot. Count Rantzau came, because Counsellor Struensee had not called on him.

"There is another enemy," continued Sir Robert—"Colonel von Eickstedt, of the Zealand Dragoons. Why," he exclaimed, as if suddenly alarmed, "is Struensee mad? All the guards inside the Palace are furnished by the Holstein regiment, and the guard outside were the Zealand Dragoons; the King, the Queen, himself—the whole Palace are in the

hands of his deadly enemies, Koeller and Eickstedt. I must draw his attention to this. Pray wait for me here, dear Miss Renira."

At that moment, as Keith was moving away, a man left the crowd and came rapidly up to him. It was his Excellency the Prime Minister, Count Struensee himself. He might be called a handsome man, for the outline of his features was regular, and his hawk nose and bright sparkling eyes made them expressive, but levity was written on his face. The mouth and chin were sensual, and a frivolous smile played on his lips. He was tall, but very stout; his magnificent and costly dress showed his extravagance and vanity. He wore the silver embossed rose-coloured ribbon of the Matilda Order, founded by the Queen, flung round his neck in a coquettish fashion.

Sir Robert Keith whispered his observations to the much-hated man, but it was evident that they made but little impression on him: careless by nature,

and blinded by his position, he wilfully disregarded the dangers surrounding him with a condescension not unmixed with hauteur, which brought the blood to the cheeks of the proud Englishman. He thanked him lightly, and promised carelessly that he would speak to Colonel Falkenskiold. With that he turned away. The English Minister watched his retreating figure with an expression of indignation.

"I cannot bear Falkenskiold," he said to Renira; "yet he is the only true man, the only gentleman among those who still support Struensee. Seneca Otto von Falkenskiold, Colonel of the body-guard, distinguished himself against the Turks, and is a Knight of the Russian Order of St. George. I will speak to him myself, although we have never yet exchanged words."

A young Baron came up at this moment to beg the Colonel to introduce him to the new lady-in-waiting, and Sir Robert gladly left Renira to the attentions of the young Holsteiner, whilst he

went to find Colonel von Falkenskiold in the crowd of dancers. Queen Caroline Matilda had just stood up again to dance, and smiled pleasantly at him; the King smiled, every one smiled and looked bright, except the anxious diplomatist, who, thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the Queen, hurried through all the rooms, looking in vain for the Colonel of the body-guard.

In vain, for the Colonel had long ago left the Palace, and was now fast asleep.

Meantime Baron von Schimmelmann was passing an agreeable time with Renira; he had just returned from a visit to England. He was enthusiastically devoted to Caroline Matilda; he was young. His enthusiasm became him, and Renira soon perceived that it was not mere profession and exaggeration.

"The time may soon come to test your enthusiasm," she said, with emphasis.

The Baron looked at her earnestly, and answered, "You do not doubt,

Miss Beauclerc, I trust, that I should stand the test."

"I do not doubt it," replied Renira heartily.

Many people were passing to and fro, and Baron Schimmelmann offered Renira his arm for a walk through the apartments. A magnificently dressed gentleman of the Court, stout, but yet handsome, with a showy woman on his arm, passed them and gave Schimmelmann a friendly nod.

"Count Enevold Brandt, the friend of the Minister Struensee, and the King's favourite attendant," said the Baron to his companion.

Soon after Renira caught these words, uttered in a sharp and rather loud voice: "The lady who was presented to-day by Madame von Gähler is said to be an Englishwoman. I tell you she is Dutch."

"You are mistaken, Schack," was the answer. "I heard plainly enough she is Renira Beauclerc, from London, and I saw her for a long time with that self-

sufficient English Minister, Sir Robert Keith; they were standing in a window, and talking most confidentially."

"The devil is in it, then," answered the sharp voice. "I have seen her pale face somewhere in Holland; I cannot mistake that little brown mole on the left cheek."

"Well," rejoined the other, laughing, "you may have seen her in Holland, but that would not make her Dutch."

"But, d—— it," replied the first hotly, "Renira is a purely Dutch name. Stay a moment, and I shall recollect where I have seen that doll's face before."

"Come to the card table, and don't mind about that pale girl; she is neither pretty nor young."

After this impertinent remark the gentlemen walked away, and Baron Schimmelmann made a movement as if to follow them, but was kept back by Renira, who said good humouredly, "You forget that these remarks, though made in a loud voice, were not meant for our ears; but pray tell me who the

man with the sharp voice may be, who was so much interested in my appearance?"

"That is the old President of the Tribunal, Baron von Schack-Rathlau," answered the Baron; "who the other was I have no idea, but I should like to cudgel him for his impertinence."

Renira treated the affair as a joke, and led the conversation to other matters, till they met the Colonel returning, out of spirits, from his fruitless search.

It was almost midnight when the English Minister left the Palace with his ladies, furious at knowing that the Christiansborg was entirely in the hands of the Queen's declared enemies. He was more than ever certain that a plot existed, and that the *dénouement* was close at hand; and he told Renira that he would see Count Falkenskiold about it next day. She entered fully into his feelings of uneasiness, but neither of them had the least idea that that very night, the threatening clouds would burst into an overwhelming storm.

By two o'clock in the morning the ball was at an end, and by three all was silent in the fine State apartments of the Christiansborg. For about an hour an intense stillness reigned over the cold winter night, and then a sharp ear would have perceived the measured sound of horse-hoofs and a slight clinking of weapons: it was a squadron of the Zealand Dragoons, Colonel von Eickstedt's regiment, under command of Lieutenant Schlomann, which silently and quietly took possession of every entrance to the Palace, having received the strictest orders to let no one in or out.

At the same time, by the light of a single candle, the leaders of the conspiracy assembled on the upper storey of the Christiansborg, in the bedroom of the widowed Queen, Juliana Maria. The royal stepmother, wrapped in a fur mantle, with a mocking smile on her lips, was watching Count von Rantzau, who was in full uniform, and though wrapped in his military cloak, shivered, not from cold alone: his conscience spoke more

loudly than ever, but it was too late to draw back.

Prince Frederick, who looked both shy and stupid, sat staring straight before him. Colonel Koeller, his athletic form drawn up to his full height, tried to utter a few blustering words, but they stuck in his throat. Colonel von Eickstedt played the part of the dispassionate, business-like soldier; he had indeed no personal feeling against either the Queen or Struensee, and there is reason to believe that he was fully persuaded he was only doing his duty. It was curious to watch Guldberg, who was the soul of the conspiracy; both before and afterwards he appeared a man of little influence, but at this moment he had thrown off his hypocritical garb, and took the place of leader, giving his commands with energy, triumph already sparkling in his eyes. There was something of the Puritan about the man; no one ever found out with him where hypocrisy ended and conviction began. He threw out some words about God's victory over Belial, and it is said that he

murmured a prayer before they separated.

And now the conspirators are descending the stairs, lighted by a former valet, Jessen, who carried a lamp, stepping carefully and avoiding the least sound, slipping one behind the other through the broad passages and dark corridors to the apartments of the King. They first entered the bedroom belonging to the King's body-servant, Brieghil, and, waking him, ordered him to lead them to the King. The man tremblingly obeyed, but they found the antechamber, contrary to the usual custom, locked. The conspirators hesitated, but Guldberg ordered Brieghil to lead them round to the small door, and the ghostly procession put itself again in motion. Brieghil went in front, then came Guldberg, carrying a candle in each hand, followed by the Queen-Mother, Prince Frederick, Count Rantzau, Eickstedt, and Koeller. Jessen, either from fear or prudence, had left them.

"What do you want? Who are you?"

screamed the King, waking suddenly as the conspirators entered his room.

Count Rantzau had undertaken to speak to the King, who always looked on him as his best friend; but he stood, unable to utter a word. Koeller seized him by the shoulders and pushed him violently forward; and at length he stammered out in a hoarse voice, "Sire, your Majesty's mother and brother are here, in presence of Eickstedt, Koeller, Guldberg and myself, to save you and the country."

The widowed Queen repeated Rantzau's words, and so did Prince Frederick, whilst the King, almost fainting, looked around him with a wild, terrified expression. "Give me some water!" he gasped at length; and when he had drank some, he added, "Rantzau said that Eickstedt is here; let him speak."

Eickstedt then came forward, and repeated Rantzau's words, but added, "The people are in insurrection, for the Queen and Struensee have conspired against your Majesty."

As soon as Christian VII. heard the

name of his beloved Queen, he declared Eickstedt was a liar, and that he did not believe him ; but the Queen-Mother and Guldberg talked to him till they had entirely confused his weak brain, and at length he was persuaded to put his signature to two orders which they had already prepared. The first appointed Eickstedt to the post of General Commandant of Copenhagen, and the second empowered Eickstedt and Koeller to take any measures they thought needful to save the King and the country. Prince Frederick witnessed the King's signature, and Eickstedt and Koeller then left. The King was made to get up, and was dressed by Brieghil, and, accompanied by the Queen-Mother, the Prince, Rantzau, and Guldberg, was taken to Prince Frederick's apartment. Here he was forced to write the following letter to his wife, Queen Caroline Matilda :—

"Comme vous n'avez pas voulu suivre les bons conseils, ce n'est pas ma faute si je me trouve obligé de vous faire conduire à Cronbourg."

Armed with this ill-written missive, the Grand Chamberlain, Count Rantzau, hurried to the Queen's apartment to carry out his gaoler's office.

The unfortunate King then signed mechanically and listlessly a number of warrants laid before him by Guldberg, and containing the names of Count Struensee, Count Brandt, Counsellor Struensee, Lieutenant Struensee, Colonel von Falkenskiold (Commandant of Copenhagen), Major-General Gude, General von Gähler and his wife, Lieutenant-Colonel von Hasselberg, Baron von Bülow (one of the Equerries), Rear-Admiral Hansen, Counsellor Villehand, and several other less distinguished people.

Meantime, Eickstedt, at the head of a squadron of Dragoons, had visited all the guard-houses, and, showing the King's signature, had announced his own appointment as Commandant of Copenhagen. He strengthened the guard at the Palace, and closed all the gates. Whilst this was going on, Colonel

von Koeller, followed by Captain von Milleville and Lieutenants von Eyben and Frank, and accompanied by twelve soldiers, went to the rooms occupied by Struensee in the *entresol* of the Palace.

Before entering, Koeller said to the officers, "Give me your word of honour, gentlemen, that you will shoot the scoundrel on the spot if he resists me and tries to escape."

The officers promised on their word of honour, but they had no need to use their weapons against Struensee, for the ruined Minister made no attempt to defend himself. After a few confused words, he obeyed Koeller's order to get up, and threw on a few clothes and a fur mantle. He tried to hide a small case in his pocket, but Koeller tore it from him. It was found, on examination, to contain poisoned pills. After his imperfect toilette, Struensee seemed to recover a little courage and presence of mind; he drew himself up, appealed to his position as Minister, and protested against this act of violence. But Koeller,

placing the point of his sword against his breast, threatened to run him through at once if he opposed the King's warrant. Struensee attempted no further resistance; he tried in vain to recover his composure, but terror overmastered him; unconsciously he allowed them to bind his hands and feet, and in this condition the man who but yesterday was the all-powerful Minister, was conveyed to a close carriage, escorted by a strong guard of cavalry, and taken to the citadel.

"My God! what is my offence?" were the only words he uttered.

At the same time the other arrests were carried out, without exciting any attention. Only Count Enevold Brandt opposed his captors with all the energy of despair; and continuing to do so after he was disarmed, they secured him with cords.

Almost at the very moment that the unhappy Struensee, tied hand and foot, was carried down the grand staircase of the Palace, Count Rantzau, followed by

the three lieutenants, Beek, Oldenborg, and Bug, entered the antechamber of Queen Caroline Matilda.

Great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead from anguish, and the three young officers chosen by Koeller to attend him watched him contemptuously as he knocked at the locked door of the Queen's bedroom.

Caroline Matilda awoke, and could be heard calling her attendants. Rantzau trembled as he heard her voice, and his fear was more creditable than the courage shown by the three lieutenants.

"What is the matter?" they heard the Queen exclaim, and the same question was repeated in a tone of anger. At last the attendants told her that Count Rantzau and three officers were in the antechamber, and demanded entrance in the King's name.

Caroline Matilda sprang up and threw a dressing-gown round her. "Run and fetch Count Struensee," she said to her women.

"They have just carried him out of

the Palace with his hands and feet bound," answered one of them.

"Betrayed, lost!" shrieked the Queen aloud.

Rantzau knocked again.

"Let the traitors in," commanded Caroline Matilda, regaining her self-possession.

The folding doors were thrown open, and Count Rantzau stood in the presence of his Queen. She advanced towards him. "What is your desire?"

Rantzau made a deep bow, and asked pardon for the intrusion, but he came by His Majesty's command. He then read aloud the note, which we have already seen, and handed it to the Queen. She glanced over it and threw it contemptuously on the ground, setting her foot upon it. "This only shows your treachery and the King's weakness!" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes.

Rantzau, angry at the contemptuous way in which the Queen treated him, said, menacingly, that she had to submit to the King's commands.

"The King," answered Caroline Matilda proudly, "knows nothing of this command, which has been extorted from his weak mind by the most shameless treachery. I demand obedience—I, the Queen."

"My orders permit no delay," thundered Count Rantzau, giving free vent to his anger, to conceal his uneasiness.

"Till I have seen the King I will obey no orders. Let me speak to the King! I insist on it," said the Queen, with determination.

At the same time she made a step towards the door. Rantzau threw himself in her way. "I will use force," he said threateningly, laying his hand on his sword.

"Wretch!" screamed the Queen angrily; "is that the language of a servant to his sovereign? Go! you are the most despicable of men! May shame and scorn rest on you for ever! Stand aside; I am not afraid of you!"

Trembling with rage, the incensed

nobleman stepped back and gave the officers a sign. Lieutenant Oldenborg laid hands on the Queen, but she thrust him aside and rushed through a side door on to the corridor, screaming aloud for help. No one heard her. Her women shrieked; the unhappy Queen sprang on to a balustrade, and tried to throw herself through the window. Lieutenant Beek caught her round the waist and drew her back; she struggled with him, and with all the strength of despair she tore him by his hair to the ground. Oldenborg came to the help of his comrade, but she defended herself from him; and thus this poor young creature, this unhappy Queen, struggled, half naked, with these ruffians, until she sank at length senseless to the ground.

Whilst her women lifted the miserable Princess on to her bed, and used means to restore her to consciousness, Minister Count von der Osten entered the room. This wily diplomatist had not joined the conspiracy, though he was well aware of its existence; and now that it was

successful, he hastened to obey Rantzau's summons, who had, in despair, sent for him.

The quiet and graceful remonstrances of Count von der Osten soothed and subdued the Queen, and she agreed to obey, and start at once for Kronburg. She begged to take her children with her, but it was easy for the cunning diplomatist to prove to the Queen that she might endanger her son's right of succession if she took him with her, and thus give her enemies a great advantage. The poor mother yielded with a sigh, and consented to start with the baby Princess only, whom she was still nursing.

Count von der Osten was perfectly aware that he was doing the conspirators the greatest service by persuading the Queen to leave for Kronburg, for as long as Caroline Matilda remained at Copenhagen their success must be doubtful; and he took care later on to demand his reward from the new powers for coming to their aid at this critical moment.

The Queen was dressed; a lady-in-

waiting, Mdlle. von Moesting, was summoned, and two coaches were brought round to the inner courtyard of the Palace. As she descended the staircase, Count Rantzau offered her his arm. "Away with you, traitor! I loath you," exclaimed the Queen. Turning deadly pale, he stepped back, and is said never to have known a peaceful moment from that hour till his death; everywhere he saw the flaming eyes of the sovereign whom he had betrayed.

In the first coach Major von Castenskiold, of the Zealand Dragoons, took the place opposite the Queen, with his sword drawn, showing her by his manner the most marked disrespect. In the second coach was the little Princess Louisa Augusta, with her nurse; and thus, guarded by a strong squadron of Dragoons, Caroline Matilda was hurried away from her capital to the gloomy fortress of Kronburg. It was about eight o'clock in the morning when they started.

As yet no one in Copenhagen knew what had happened, but the rolling of

carriages through the streets at that early hour—the prisoners were each taken to the citadel in a separate carriage—and the passing to and fro of the cavalry escorts, had attracted attention, the more so as the conspirators for some little time past had thrown out dark hints of a plot against the life of the King.

It was nine o'clock before Sir Robert learnt the events of the previous night, through a faithful servant of the Queen's household, who had managed to escape, when all the rest of her servants, as well as those of Baron Struensee, had been arrested. He sought refuge with the English Minister.

Sir Robert, who knew nothing of the Queen's departure, hurried off at once with his secretary and a servant to the Palace. He found the streets full of anxious groups, discussing with the greatest excitement the events of the night, the full details of which were gradually becoming known, and loudly cheering for Christian VII. Some few voices were raised for the widowed Queen

and Prince Frederick, and everywhere the hatred of Struensee and the foreigners was most apparent.

The English Minister could not gain admission to the Palace, but he learnt there the departure of the Queen. He hurried to Rantzau, to Osten; everywhere he was refused admission—no one cared to face the representative of the English Court! In constantly increasing crowds the people of Copenhagen streamed towards the Christiansborg. About ten o'clock the King, led by his brother, appeared on a balcony; he waved his handkerchief to the people, which was the signal for a mighty shout. At this the poor silly King was so delighted that he joined in, and at the top of his voice shouted hurrah for Christian VII. Her motherly feelings deeply touched, the terrible Princess of Wolfenbüttel, in morning dress, stood at a window, looking out on the crowds, and rejoicing at the success of her wicked schemes.

Sir Robert returned to his house in the deepest sorrow and anxiety.

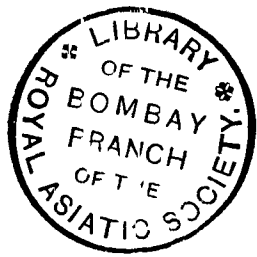
Towards noon Christian VII. drove through the town, in a carriage drawn by eight horses; the people were in a fever of joy at the deliverance of their King from the dangers which threatened him through the evil machinations of Caroline Matilda and Struensee. Christian sat, as usual, staring straight before him, neither understanding nor responding to the joy of his people.

In the evening there was a reception at the Palace, and a State representation at the theatre; and thus the Court celebrated the victory over the "Cabal."

In the town it was celebrated in another fashion. As soon as it was dark, a mob began to collect, and, incited by certain persons, attacked the splendid establishment for balls and concerts kept by a man called Gabel, in a house which he rented for the purpose from Count Schulin. Gabel's daughter, the beautiful Esther Gabel, was Struensee's mistress. The house was first plundered and then pulled down. As the watch had looked on, without attempting to interfere, the

mob moved on further, plundering and ruining different public places of amusement. A wild spirit of robbery, drunkenness, and destruction reigned unchecked throughout that night in Copenhagen; and it was only when they proceeded to attack the stately Mont de Piété, that the Zealand Dragoons appeared and dispersed the mob.

In this worthy manner Copenhagen celebrated the victory of Juliana Maria and her adherents, on the 17th January, 1772.



Chapter III

SUNSET

THE storm of January 17th had, indeed, struck down the unfortunate Queen Caroline Matilda, with Struensee and other victims, but it had by no means cleared the atmosphere. On the contrary, since the victory of the Wolfenbüttel Princess a leaden weight lay on Copenhagen and the whole land. All the reforms undertaken by Struensee were at once suspended. The new arrangements, good as well as bad, were set aside without distinction, though in many cases it was impossible to revert to the old ways; and thus a state of things arose the hopeless chaos of which must have gone to the heart of every true Danish patriot.

By degrees the truth oozed out as to the criminal motives which led to the *coup d'état* of January 17th. People began to see that neither Caroline Matilda nor Struensee were likely to have conspired against the life of the King, who, in spite of his weakness of intellect, was their sole support in the country; in short, it was clear that the royal stepmother, to place her own son in a position of authority, had basely deceived the country. It was also soon apparent that the new measures of Prince Frederick, or rather of Guldberg, who was the real Regent, both at home and abroad, gave far more cause for dissatisfaction than the recently so much hated measures of Struensee. The promised golden days had not yet arrived. Gradually, too, the fearful scheme of the Wolfenbüttel Princess was unfolded to the people, and it was soon an open secret that Juliana Maria meant to bring a serious accusation of adultery against the young Queen, to condemn and execute her, and declare her children

illegitimate. Thus only could she gain her ultimate end of placing her own misshapen son on the throne of Denmark.

This terrible woman found the necessary tools in Baron von Schack-Rathlau and others, and the accusation was really brought. With diabolical cunning they persuaded Struensee, whose miserable cowardice we have already seen, that he would save himself by confessing to a criminal intrigue with Queen Caroline Matilda. If he did so, they led him to believe that, in order to avoid scandal and to throw no doubt on the birth of the Crown Prince, the action would be quashed, and he himself only banished rom Denmark. The coward eagerly grasped at this means of safety; he yielded to the shameful and lying suggestion, and was thus hopelessly lost.

The Queen herself was entrapped in a more cruel fashion. When they first reported to her the scandalous confession they had extorted from Struensee, she exclaimed contemptuously: "Miserable

creature! I knew he had no courage, but I did not know he was so wretched a poltroon." But when the first burst of indignation was over, pity for the unhappy man who had been her friend and adviser filled her tender woman's heart; and as they cunningly reminded her, Struensee was only in danger through her, as they lyingly assured her she alone could save his head by confirming his shameful confession, she fell into the snare, and her enemies forced from her the admission of a crime of which she had never been guilty, which she had never even conceived.

What Struensee avowed from pure cowardice against his better conscience to save himself, Caroline Matilda corroborated from mistaken generosity, hoping in this way to save the life of the unhappy Minister.

Schack-Rathlau, the grand inquisitor, had played his infernal game cleverly, and Juliana Maria was well satisfied with him.

There is no doubt that the Wolfen-

büttel Princess would have sent Caroline Matilda to the scaffold but for the energetic conduct of Sir Robert Keith. He applied to England in time to save the sister of George III. The least delay would have been fatal to the Queen; but when Sir Robert came forward boldly and showed a despatch from Lord Suffolk, announcing the departure of a powerful British fleet, even the bloodthirsty Juliana Maria lost courage, and angrily gave consent for the departure of the Queen.

As the spring approached those northern lands, the Queen left the country. "Oh! how I detest you, horrible Denmark!" Such was the bitter farewell of the unhappy sovereign as she took a last look at the fast-fading coast of Seeland from the deck of a British frigate. We may pardon such harsh words to the mourning mother whose children had been taken from her, to the outcast Queen driven from her throne, to the innocent woman robbed of her good name!

No Prince of Denmark has since that time won the hand of any English Princess; but English fleets have twice appeared on the coast of Seeland, executing terrible revenge. The Danish hatred of England made Denmark the staunch ally of France in the beginning of this century—an alliance which cost her her fleet and the kingdom of Norway. The Danish royal family died out with Frederick VII. The Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein and Lauenburg were joined to Prussia, and at this moment a German Prince is King of Denmark.

Juliana Maria, unable to execute the English Princess, laid strong hands on her other victims. Struensee was condemned to death—a judicial murder, for, frivolous as the man had been, and much as he was hated for his overbearing manners, he had done nothing deserving of death. Brandt was also condemned to death—a yet more iniquitous judicial murder, for the crime of which he was accused was absurd. He was found guilty of having laid sacrilegious hands

on the anointed Majesty of Denmark. He had certainly done so, for he had often wrestled with the childish King, whose great amusement it was to wrestle with everybody, and who, in boyish ostentation, challenged every one who approached him to a wrestling match. They might just as reasonably have condemned the Moorish slaves, who fought and wrestled with the weak-minded King every day.

Counsellor Struensee had to pay for the hatred of the Queen-Mother by long and severe imprisonment. He afterwards became Minister of Finance in Prussia, where no whisper was ever raised against him. Colonel Falkenskiold, after years of imprisonment in Norway, was finally banished for life, after Juliana Maria had stripped him of the Russian Order of St. George—a decoration she had not bestowed, and over which she had no power. To her accomplices, on the other hand, she was most generous, loading them with titles, orders, places of preferment, and even large sums of money.

Schack Karl, Count of Rantzau Ascheberg, was made General-in-Chief, and received the Order of the Elephant, and at the same time his numerous debts were paid for him; but the wages of sin brought him no lasting satisfaction, and he eventually died miserably in a foreign country. Most of the others fared no better.

Juliana Maria lived for years in her rooms at the top of the gloomy Christiansborg. She never would change them, because she had from their windows watched through a telescope the execution of her deadly enemy, Struensee; and she openly boasted that this was her reason for retaining them. But her plans for placing her own son on the throne of Denmark failed; the son of the hated Caroline Matilda succeeded his father. "Her hatred of her stepgrandson kept her alive," says a Danish historian.

Renira Beauclerc was forced to leave Denmark whilst the Queen was still a prisoner there. The pale, quiet girl had,

in an inexplicable manner, become obnoxious to two men, at that time all powerful in Denmark—Count von der Osten and Baron von Schack-Rathlau—and for a time there seemed to be some idea of including her in the general accusation. She was watched, and all her doings carefully reported, and she would certainly have been arrested had she been anywhere but in the house of the English Minister, whose quiet, determined character frightened her enemies. She left Denmark in March, 1772.

Sir Robert Keith's anger, as well as surprise, was aroused by the animosity shown to his guest. He could not conceive what occasioned it, and any explanation was refused. Renira had mentioned to him the scene at the ball in the Palace, where Schack-Rathlau thought he recognised her, and had referred to a brown mark on her left cheek, which was formed of three little points, making a sort of triangle. But Schack-Rathlau had been at the Hague

long before Renira passed through Holland on her journey to Denmark, so this only served to make the matter more puzzling and inexplicable.

And what actuated Count von der Osten? Was the wily diplomatist only influenced by Schack, or had he his own private cause for dislike? Had these persecutions any connection with Renira's unknown parentage, or did they imagine they could elicit anything from her that would inculpate Caroline Matilda? Sir Robert could not extort the least explanation, and by February the state of things was so uncomfortable that the worst might be expected, and the English Minister, whose time was absorbed by his efforts on behalf of the unhappy Queen, felt it would be wisest for Renira's safety to send her away from Copenhagen. So Renira Beauclerc went, in March, to Hamburg with Lady Helen Keith and her children, and they lodged together in the house of a widow lady, Baroness von Bülow, to whom they had introductions from Equerry von Bülow,

the former Master of the Horse to Queen Caroline Matilda.

Renira found herself in the centre of a small but delightful circle of friends, all of them admirers and adherents of the young persecuted Queen; most of them belonged to the Holstein nobility living round Hamburg, but some had left Copenhagen in deep disgust at the brutal and bloody measures of the new administration. It may easily be believed that this circle did not escape the attention of the numerous spies whom the Wolfenbüttel Princess, in her constant fear of the adherents of the dethroned Queen, employed everywhere; but as every member observed the utmost reserve and caution, no active measures were taken against them.

This reserve and caution were mainly owing to Renira Beauclerc's influence, for the pale, quiet English girl had gradually become the leader of this circle. To be allowed to hear her sing was a privilege, to have any special conversation with her a mark of distinction.

No one brought much into contact with Renira could resist her influence. There was a charm about her which fascinated women and men alike, and yet it was difficult to say where the charm lay. It is true that Renira's voice was wonderful, but that alone could hardly explain the influence she gained. She was not beautiful; she was not clever, in the society sense of the word; she was not better educated than other high-bred ladies of that day; she was neither imperious nor flattering; she was only gentle, and quiet, and friendly; and yet they were all under her influence, and she was well aware that it was so.

The pale girl possessed a passionate power of affection, which sorrow had tempered but not destroyed. She was full of courage, and yet full of prudence. In fact, Renira's character was a strong one, and a strong character always commands the respect and obedience of weaker spirits, often against their will, still oftener without their knowledge. It is probable that the secret of Renira's

parentage was a means to the same end, for the general idea was that she was of princely birth, and such a belief had far more influence in those days than it would have at the present time.

Had Renira and her friends cause, real cause, for all the caution and reserve they practised? Was not Renira perfectly safe in the old Hanse town and on German soil from the ill-will and revenge of the Danish powers, which she had hoped to escape from by leaving Copenhagen? or was she afraid of any unfriendly move on the part of her unknown parents?

Renira certainly possessed some political influence in Hamburg, and had probably been suspected of the same influence in Copenhagen, which was an error. At Hamburg she was really the medium of communication between the friends and adherents of Caroline Matilda and the exiled Queen, who was living at Celle; for from the day the Queen left Kronburg for her brother's German possessions, communications were

opened which had for their ultimate object the restoration of the Queen and her appointment as Regent during her son's minority. As Guldberg's government became more oppressive, and people learnt by bitter experience the difference between Juliana Maria and Caroline Matilda, the party in favour of the Queen gained ground. It soon numbered most of those who had opposed the Queen from mere hatred of Struensee; and many of the best Danish patriots, alarmed for the safety of the Crown Prince as long as Juliana Maria was in power, joined those who were trying to effect the return of Caroline Matilda.

Renira had allowed herself to be persuaded by the young Baron Schimmelmann to undertake the negotiations between Copenhagen and Celle. Her task, as we shall soon see, was no light one; but with her enthusiasm for the ill-used sovereign, the hardest task seemed light.

The difficulties which Renira had to contend with arose partly from outward

circumstances and partly from the Queen herself. When King George offered his unhappy sister the Castle of Celle for her residence, he charged his elder sister, Princess Augusta, wife of the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick Wolfenbüttel, to receive her younger sister, to try and comfort her in her misery, and to visit her constantly, but to take care that Caroline Matilda had no correspondence with any one in Copenhagen, as this might possibly destroy the good understanding between the Courts of Denmark and England. There was little need for King George to impress this on the Hereditary Princess of Wolfenbüttel, for she was entirely devoted to her husband, and he on his side obeyed blindly every instigation of his dear aunt, the terrible Queen-Mother in Copenhagen. The adherents of Queen Caroline Matilda had therefore to reckon her own sister as one of their most dangerous opponents; and as she went almost every Wednesday to Celle, and stayed there till Sunday, and often spent whole weeks at a time there, no-

thing that passed in the little Court at Celle could be kept secret from her.

Renira Beauclerc, under pretence of being the relative of a Dutch lady living at Celle, had often visited the place in disguise, but without attempting an audience with the Queen. She made careful observations first, and then one day contrived to meet the Queen in the most natural and unconcerned manner. She was at once recognised by Caroline Matilda, who showed great feeling at seeing her, spoke to her for some time, and presented her to the Princess Augusta. The latter looked on the meeting as quite accidental; there was nothing to arouse her suspicions in an Englishwoman—an unknown orphan; and even when she met her there again later, she never attached any political importance to her visits.

But Renira found these outward obstacles less difficult to overcome than the Queen's intense and natural horror of Denmark, and she could never have succeeded in her task had not the feel-

ings of the mother, and her anxiety for her much-loved son, come to her aid. Could Caroline Matilda think of her boy without trembling for his safety, for was he not entirely in the power of the unscrupulous Juliana Maria?

Renira stayed for some time in Celle, and had many private interviews with the Queen; and the better she knew her, the more eager and enthusiastic she became in her cause. She was a great comfort to the unhappy sovereign, for she always brought the anxious, tender mother the latest and most trustworthy information about the royal children at Copenhagen.

Only once in these interviews did the Queen mention Struensee. They were talking one day of the strength and blooming health of the Crown Prince, in spite of his naturally delicate constitution.

"That is the work of that unhappy man," said Caroline Matilda, with sad emphasis; "it was his medical treatment alone that saved my son and restored his health."

In fact, Frederick VI. lived to be an old man, and was always well, in spite of his inherited delicacy of constitution; and to the day of his death he faithfully observed the simple mode of life prescribed for him by Struensee.

For a long time Renira fought in vain against the Queen's repugnance to mix again in Danish affairs. At last, one day, she brought her a picture of the Crown Prince, which Baron von Schimmelmann had bought with this object in Copenhagen; the mother was vanquished by the sight of her child's face, and she declared herself ready to return to Copenhagen, and assume the Regency, provided that her brother, King George III., would sanction the undertaking, and give it his open support.

This was not only reasonable, but absolutely necessary, and the efforts of the Queen's friends were now directed to obtaining King George's aid. But the right emissary was wanting, till he was found at length in an Englishman travelling on the Continent Sir C. Wrax-

all. Renira met this man in society, and soon felt that this high-souled but cautious Englishman was well fitted for the task. She brought the matter before him, through Baron von Bülow and others, and found she had discovered the right man for their purpose.

Wraxall made some pretext for visiting Celle, and returned fascinated by the Queen and the reception he had met with; and he was soon on his way to London with letters from Caroline Matilda to King George, to Lord Suffolk, the Minister, and to the Hanoverian Lord Chamberlain, von Lichtenstein. But George III. did not enter into the affair so readily as was hoped by the friends of the Queen.

Wraxall showed great zeal, and at the same time great discretion, in his conduct of affairs; but even he could work but very slowly, especially as he was not admitted to any personal interviews with the King. During this time of anxious suspense, a gentleman called one evening at Renira's house, announcing

himself as the bearer of a letter from Sir Robert Keith. He was at once admitted, and Renira saw before her a distinguished-looking man, with a fine, erect figure, a powerful forehead, and clever eyes; a slightly ironical smile played on his thin, lightly closed lips. He appeared to be about fifty years of age, but singularly lithe and active in all his movements. He handed Renira an unsealed letter from the Colonel, who stated that the bearer, who wished for a private interview with Renira, was known to him, and was a man whom she might entirely trust.

Renira, at the wish of the stranger, at once read these lines; and when he had taken a seat, she awaited his communication with eager curiosity.

"Mademoiselle," he said, opening the conversation with perfect ease, "you see that Sir Robert recommends me as a man whom you may entirely trust. I only hope that the confession I am about to make will not destroy the effect of his recommendation. I am not really afraid

that it will do so, if you will but allow me to tell my whole story. Have I your leave to do so?"

"I am ready to listen, sir," said Renira, whose curiosity increased at every word her visitor uttered.

"I must, then, own I gained this introduction by a diplomatic stratagem. I have outwitted the excellent Colonel, and yet, I venture to assert, I still deserve your entire trust."

"You have, at least, taken a rather unusual course, sir," replied Renira quietly.

"I own that," continued the stranger; "but I feel certain of your forgiveness, mademoiselle, for I hope to render you two services."

"And this is your only reason for coming here?" said Renira, with a slight tone of distrust.

"I beg your pardon; I have not said so," replied her visitor hastily; "but I must ask you to listen to me quietly. I must at once tell you that I am Baron Johann Matthias Simolin, and that I have

the honour of representing Her Majesty the Empress of Russia at the Danish Court."

Renira drew herself up, as if to be on her guard with any one coming from the Court at Copenhagen.

"I reached Copenhagen after the catastrophe of January 17th, 1772; and though as a man I deeply deplored the fate of the hapless young Queen, I felt as an ambassador that I must make the most of the chance afforded me by the fall of my Empress's opponent, Struensee, to try and re-establish the good understanding which once existed between us and Denmark, to regain and, if possible, increase our former influence. I carefully studied the situation and the men at Copenhagen. The men filled me with horror. My interest in the betrayed and ill-treated Queen was increased by all I heard; my feelings as a man were outraged. I was disgusted with the situation as a diplomatist. I soon saw that no reliance could be placed on the men now in power on the Sound. It is impossible

to effect any political combination with a Government where incapacity, self-seeking, and vulgarity reign supreme. I felt sure a party of malcontents must exist somewhere, and that naturally they would form plans for upsetting this evil Government. This might be effected in various ways. The simplest, of course, would be the recall of Queen Caroline Matilda as Regent. In politics the simplest plan is the best. I felt, therefore, I could not be far wrong in assuming that the malcontents in Copenhagen must have managed to open communications with the Court at Celle. But, knowing that the Hereditary Princess of Brunswick was on the watch at Celle, I felt sure that the centre of these communications would be in some other place; and I naturally thought of Hamburg as near to Celle, and still nearer to Holstein. I must compliment you, mademoiselle, on the difficulty I have had in discovering you; and your precautions might have baffled me entirely, had not one of my agents, who knew of your residence in Hamburg,

seen you twice in Celle. From that moment I guessed in whose fair hands lay all these tangled skeins. It was necessary for the Russian Ambassador to come to an understanding with you. I set inquiries on foot, and soon learnt more than I dared to hope. When I heard that you were for some time a guest of Sir Robert, I might easily have asked him for an introduction to you; but he might have suspected my motive, and I dare not let him see my hand, for it was natural to conjecture that Caroline Matilda would turn first for help to her dear brother George; and I know the English Court too well not to know that this dear brother, influenced by all sorts of considerations, cannot make up his mind to help his sister.

"I know, too, that King George believes, or half believes, in his sister's guilt. Juliana Maria has managed to shake his faith in her innocence, and I can tell you you are building on sand if you rely on King George—he will do nothing for the Queen. My Empress

firmly believes in the Queen's innocence, and I am empowered to act for her. You see, therefore, mademoiselle, that I could only ask the English Minister for an introduction to you on some urgent, solid, but strictly unpolitical pretext; but I had such a pretext."

Here Baron Simolin paused and looked earnestly at Renira, who had listened to the clear and simple narration of the Russian Ambassador with the greatest eagerness. She saw, indeed, with some alarm, that her whole secret, so carefully guarded, had been discovered by a stranger; but she recognised that she was dealing not only with a diplomatist of the first rank, but with a true gentleman. This quieted her, but Simolin's last sentence and searching look woke in her a vague expectation of something fresh and unexpected.

Controlling herself with an effort, she simply signed to him to continue his narrative.

"Mademoiselle," said Simolin significantly, "I told Colonel Keith that I was

able to give you information concerning your own birth and origin."

At these words a deep blush overspread Renira's face, and she pressed her hand on her heart, but remained silent.

"I see that my words trouble you," said the diplomatist in a sympathising voice.

"Oh, pray, pray go on!" said Renira, displaying a power of self-control that filled the Baron with respect for the young girl.

"In a conversation with a bitter enemy of the Queen," continued Simolin, "Baron Schack-Rathlau, I learnt that he was very much interested in a lady, apparently an Englishwoman—in fact, in you, mademoiselle—born on board a Russian frigate in the roadstead of Belem. Such an event is too rare not to attract attention. I too knew of a lady born on board a Russian frigate in the roadstead of Belem. Schack-Rathlau thought you so strikingly like the Princess L. W., whom he had seen at the Hague, that he mistook you

at first for the Princess, until he recollected that she must be at least fifteen years older than you are. She may have been about your age when he saw her at the Hague—hence his mistake. What special reasons he had, or may still have, for inquiring about you, I could not find out. But what he told me was of the greatest importance to me. Now listen carefully. A few years ago I was sent from Regensburg to Turkey, to conduct the negotiations for peace. There I became acquainted with General Yelegin, a fine officer, who had in earlier days served for a time in our navy. He had led a life of varied adventure, and knew how to describe it in the most delightful manner. One evening he told me that as first lieutenant of the frigate *Norczlwin*, he stood godfather to a child, born on board the frigate, in the roadstead of Belem. One night when the frigate was at Helvoetsluys, a lady with two maids and two men-servants was brought secretly on board by a gentleman. She was very much affected at

parting with this gentleman; then on account of her condition she showed herself very seldom during the long voyage. Every one thought her to be an Englishwoman of high rank, although she was entered in the ship's lists as the French wife of a merchant of St. Petersburg. Yelegin thought the Captain had only touched at Lisbon to land this lady, with her child and servants, for he had nothing to do there, and set sail again directly they were landed. The fact that a Russian captain was willing to do this proved that the parents of the child, or at least one of them, must be of very high birth. Now, mademoiselle, there can be no doubt that you are that child for whom General Yelegin, as he was afterwards, stood sponsor, for that child was christened Renira Guillemette Beauclerc, daughter of M. Guillaume Beauclerc and Madame Renira Beauclerc, *née* Lasteyre, belonging to St. Petersburg. The surnames were false—that Yelegin knew positively, for he had recognised the gentleman who had brought the lady on

board, and from whom she had parted with such grief. That gentleman was no one less than William of O., Prince of N. T., and that Yelegin was not mistaken is proved by Baron Schack Rathlau, for the Princess of L. W. is the second sister of Prince William, and extraordinarily like him, and has, like him and like you, mademoiselle, the little brown mark on the left cheek. This adventure interested Yelegin so deeply that he copied the declaration of birth and baptism out of the ship's register. He gave me the paper to examine; it remained with me. Under the pressure of business we both forgot all about it; and as the poor General died last year, I have no hesitation in placing the paper in your hands; it must be of some value in your eyes, though it is no legal document."

It is easy to imagine the feelings with which Renira received these disclosures and the faded and crumpled paper. She bowed her head in silent gratitude.

Simolin, who felt that Renira could not speak, continued in a lighter tone: "I

think that I have shown you convincingly who is your father; of your mother I know nothing, but I beg to help you in any further inquiries, which would be carried on with best effect in the Netherlands. You now see that this communication gained me Colonel Keith's introduction, and I think you will pardon the ruse I practised on the English diplomatist."

"I have nothing to forgive—I have only to thank you," said Renira, rising, and giving her hand to the Ambassador, who kissed it with a deep and respectful bow; he was astonished at the power and self-control of the girl—Renira enchanted him.

"I can hardly thank you now," continued Renira; "but I know what you are seeking. Do not let us talk any more of my affairs, but tell me what I am to say to the Queen."

Simolin took a moment to recover himself; he was more moved than Renira. He then in a few words explained how far the Queen and her friends might count

on the help of Russia in their undertaking. Russia was ready to aid in the work of restoration, and without the help of England.

After discussing the precautions necessary to be observed in their future communications, Simolin took leave, enchanted with the manners and appearance of this pale, quiet daughter of a Prince.

This visit of Baron Simolin took place in the early days of May, 1775. Renira at once recognised the importance to the Queen of the Russian offers; for she knew well that Wraxall, who just at that time was paying a second visit to London, had but little hopes of influencing King George's wavering mind in favour of her plans. George was quite willing that his sister should be made Regent; but in case the scheme failed, he did not wish to compromise himself. Important as the news was which the Russian Ambassador brought to our heroine on the subject of her birth, and great as was its effect at first on her mind, Renira quickly

determined to set aside everything that concerned herself only, and to devote herself absolutely to the service of the Queen.

She therefore left Hamburg on the 10th of May, and observing her usual precautions, she arrived at Celle just as the light was waning. The Dutch lady with whom she always lodged, under pretence of relationship, received her with a burst of tears. Renira, who had learnt on the way that the Queen was ill, was filled with apprehension.

"Speak, speak!" she cried eagerly.

"The Queen died last night," was the answer.

Renira sank down in a long faint.

Yes, Queen Caroline Matilda died on May 11th, 1775, at ten minutes past eleven o'clock at night; twenty-three years nine months and twenty days old.

Renira's first idea, when she came to herself, was: "This is some crime! It is the work of the Queen Juliana Maria! She who mixed the poison for her stepson has mixed it, and with more

success, for the hated mother of the Crown Prince!"

Many people at that time shared Renira's thought, for just in that spring weather the Queen was in the fullest beauty and bloom of health. Her strong constitution had weathered the storm of 1772. She was full of the hope of reunion with her children, and of clearing her character before the world.

The thought of revenge never entered her sweet and generous mind, and in the midst of these hopes she died quite suddenly; the rays of light shining anew on her dark path, and which her friends greeted as the dawn of a new day, proved to be the sunset rays before the long night of death.

Renira was soon convinced that Juliana Maria was not guilty in this case. One of the Queen's pages died early in May of severe scarlet fever. He had been a great favourite with her, and, full of sympathy, she insisted on visiting the vault where the body was laid. Shocked and distressed at the sight, and bathed

in tears, she hastily left the vault. But she had taken the infection. On the third day she took to her bed, and never left it again.

The sorrow in Celle for the loved Queen was very great, and was shown in many touching ways. Renira received the fullest account of the last days of her mistress from M. Roques, the minister of the French Reformed Church in Celle —a man much esteemed by the Queen. He aided the noble Princess in her many secret works of charity, saw her constantly, and was often with her in her last illness. He said to Renira, "I stood by her bed but a few moments before she breathed her last. Though very weak, she was perfectly conscious. After I had read the prayer for the dying, she said suddenly, in a firm voice, 'M. Roques, I shall soon stand before God. I tell you I am innocent of the charge brought against me. I was never unfaithful to my husband.'"

The minister repeated this declaration of the dying Queen, and even those who

had doubted must have felt convinced of the innocence of the injured, deceived, and persecuted Princess.

Thus died Caroline Matilda, who in earliest youth had been given as wife to a depraved profligate; who, during seven years, amidst the outward show of respect, had to endure the most bitter and cruel insults that as a Queen, a mother, and a wife could be heaped upon her; who passed from a throne into exile, narrowly escaping the scaffold; and who died in her youthful prime, none of her children, no member of her family, near her. But loving friends stood round her bed, loving hands closed her eyes, and affection and respect followed her to the grave.

Chapter IV

THICK CLOUDS GATHERING

IT is again a cold day in January, and we find Renira Beauclerc at her piano, and hear her glorious voice—that voice which has lost none of its power, fulness, and tone, though twenty years have passed between the January day when we first saw this daughter of a Prince in the house of the English Ambassador at Copenhagen and the day when we find her again in the Tuileries at Paris.

Time has been very kind to Renira Beauclerc, and not to her voice alone. It is true that she has become even thinner and more delicate one might say more ethereal; but the pale, oval, noble face is quite unchanged pure and

still as marble, and the large, dark, expressive eyes shine as brightly as formerly under their long eyelashes.

We must tell our readers, shortly, what Renira has been doing during the twenty years that lie between the lady-in-waiting of Queen Caroline Matilda and the lady-in-waiting of Queen Marie Antoinette; what her experiences have been, and how she came to Paris.

After the funeral of the unfortunate Caroline Matilda, when Renira had seen the grave close over her loved Queen, she returned to Hamburg, and, having no more pressing duty, devoted herself to her own affairs.

Renira had never doubted the truth of the intelligence brought her by Baron Simolin—the coincidence of the various circumstances was too striking. She was convinced that she was the daughter of Prince Wilhelm, but she felt no inclination to approach her father. She would scarcely have done so even had she been able to prove her birth by authentic documents. Renira was certain that her

recognition would be the ruin of her mother, for only on this supposition could she explain her mother's conduct towards her. She had indeed cost Renira a bitter pang when she broke off her engagement with young Wappäus and summoned her to England. Renira felt her mother had no right to act thus, and she clung faithfully to the memory of her lover; but, as a daughter, she had no feeling of resentment against her mother, she saw her mother's love even in this act of tyranny. The mother's heart was full of her, and guarded her future by hindering her from making a marriage not suitable to her real position. Renira found, even in the unrelenting firmness with which her mother had acted, a proof of love, which touched her heart and proved to her her legitimacy. The marriage of an illegitimate daughter with a poor man would have been of no consequence. The Prince's daughter was sure that her pension came from her mother; that the London banker had only used her father's name

95813

to draw off her attention from her mother; and a whole series of small circumstances fostered this idea.

So, filled with the tenderest filial feelings, Renira wrote a touching letter to her unknown mother, acquainting her with all the information she had received from Baron Simolin. She enclosed the paper copied from the ship's register, and ended by entreating her mother to give her, not, indeed, any explanation or recognition, but simply some sign of her affection. This letter she then sent sealed, but without an address, to the head of the London bank from which she received her pension, who was personally known to her, begging him to deliver it to the person who commissioned him to pay her money.

At first she only received an ordinary business letter from the bank, acknowledging the receipt of her letter. But a few months later some unknown person left a box at her house containing an old fashioned gold watch, with a chain

made of splendid black and grey hair plaited together.

With many tears Renira kissed this watch and chain of hair; she felt that she held in her hand the token of affection for which she had entreated her mother. She knew it was her mother's watch, and the hair her mother's hair, black and shining as it had once been, grey as it was now; and when she opened the watch and eagerly examined it, she found in the case a few words scratched with a pin.

The daughter uttered a cry of delight; they were the first words of the mother to her child: "I weep and love thee, my Renira; love mé, and hope with me." And Renira loved her mother, and hoped with her; she loved on from year to year, and was never weary of loving her mother, and hoping with her, though, as the years passed by, she felt convinced that she alone hoped on—that her mother was dead. But that one token of love, those few words were

enough to secure Renira's happiness, her strong and noble nature had never felt lonely or unhappy since she received them.

In Hamburg and in Brussels, where Renira had lived since 1780, she constantly saw Baron Simolin, and carried on an active correspondence with the distinguished diplomatist, who about the same time was made Russian Ambassador in London. She might have taken a high position in the world, for Baron Simolin entreated her to become his wife; but she was true to her first love, and Simolin had to content himself with the friendship of this noble and admired woman.

When Renira left Hamburg for Brussels, she travelled by way of the small German capital where she had once lived as lady in waiting. Possibly she felt a vague hope that she might hear something of the young student to whom she had once engaged herself, even if she did not see him. She had never received any answer to her letters,

never the least sign of affection, surely as she had reckoned on it.

It was with peculiar feelings of sadness, though, as we have said, not without hope, that Renira entered the well-known town on an autumnal evening. The old Princess, as she knew, was long dead; she had no reason to preserve an incognito, yet she did not wish to excite attention in the little place. She asked at the hotel after Professor Wappäus and his family. The old scholar had been dead for some time, and of the son she could hear nothing, but two daughters of the old man were still living in the town: Marianne was married to a Court councillor, and Emilie lived unmarried with her younger sister and her numerous children. Renira's heart beat fast. Thirteen years before, the sisters of her intended were bright, merry girls, devoted to her; and it was pleasant to feel sure that after so long a time they would receive her with unaltered affection. They both knew the pale, gentle face

directly, and Renira spent a few happy weeks in the house of her friends, by whom she was treated as a dear relative, and the affection shown her refreshed the lonely woman. It was the first time she had ever lived in a family as one of its members; and this visit was a precious memory, cherished with love and gratitude through the rest of her life. Her correspondence with the two sisters was for years her greatest pleasure, and she followed the course of each one of Marianne's children with loving interest. Her generosity knew no bounds when a member of "her family," as she used to call them, was in question, though, where her own expenses were concerned, this generous "Aunt Renira" was most frugal.

But of her intended Renira heard nothing. Young Wappäus had left the little capital directly after Renira had been summoned away to search her out, and had never let any one hear of him again; not the least news had ever reached his home, he had utterly dis-

appeared. The old father had for years made inquiries, but all in vain; his sisters felt sure he was dead; they were persuaded that some accident had befallen the unknown man in a strange land.

After this Renira lived quietly at Brussels, occupied in works of charity; she carried on her music with great diligence, and received many interesting guests in her little house near the Scherbäecker gate, where she sang and —hoped on. Baron Simolin, whose thoughts were constantly with her, in all love and respect, gave all his friends, whose acquaintance he thought might interest Renira, introductions to her, and thus she maintained a constant intercourse with the outer world.

One day the attendants of the Archduchess Maria Christina, who, as imperial vice-regent, lived in Brussels, appeared in mourning. Renira inquired the cause of this Court mourning. Prince Wilhelm of N. T. was dead; and Renira, too, put on Court mourning. It was a sad

satisfaction to her to wear black for the father whom she had never seen.

For a time this Prince's daughter hoped that now, perhaps, her mother would take notice of her—but in vain; no sign was made, and from this moment she felt convinced that her mother too was gone, that she had passed away without seeing her child, and that she only hoped for reunion in another world. Thus our heroine's life passed by quietly till the year 1791.

It may be easily imagined with what absorbing interest Renira followed the course of the French Revolution. Here again she saw a brave and beautiful Queen exposed to wild hatred and cruel slander, and her thoughts turned to Caroline Matilda, as she heard of Marie Antoinette. Everything at Paris was on a larger scale than at Copenhagen. There could be no comparison between the events in the northern capital and the terrible scenes in Paris, or their political importance; but the position of the two Queens bore a resemblance which often

made Renira shudder. She was, too, in a better position for estimating the significance of the struggle than many other people, for her friend Baron Simolin was now Ambassador in Paris, and kept her by his letters thoroughly acquainted with all that passed, besides sending her living witnesses in the persons of many distinguished people who fled from Paris.

In the year 1791, just after the unsuccessful flight of the Royal Family had been stopped at Varennes, Renira received an urgent appeal from Simolin to come to Paris.

The truth was that Baron Simolin, as well as Count Axel Fersen, had taken part in the preparations for the flight of the Royal Family, by means of a friend, an Englishman named Crawford. The Royal Family travelled under the Russian pass of a Baroness von Korff, prepared by the Ambassador and his nephew. Baron Alexander Simolin, at that time his secretary, had played an important part in the flight, having with Count Fersen driven the royal coach. On the

failure of the scheme, the Ambassador had fallen under suspicion, and it required all the ingenuity of the experienced diplomatist to avoid an immediate rupture between France and Russia. He gauged the situation accurately, and knew that ere long the rupture must come.

It was shortly after the flight to Varennes that Renira received a letter from Simolin, in which he said: "Many years ago, I came to you, my dearest friend, and offered my services to an unhappy, innocent, and slandered Princess. I came too late; God willed it differently for Caroline Matilda. To day, I come to you again, not to offer assistance, but to beg for help from you in saving a Queen, as innocent as Caroline Matilda, but even more unhappy, more fiercely slandered. You may be too late now, as I was then—perhaps God wills it otherwise for Marie Antoinette—but that must not hinder me from doing my duty, and it will not hinder you, my friend, from hastening to help me. The dangers which surround this hated but noble

woman will call out the courage of the brave soul who long ago acted so wisely and coolly for the unhappy Queen of Denmark; she will do all she can for the yet more unhappy Queen of France, and, God grant, with better result. The sky is thickly overcast; there is hardly a ray of hope for Marie Antoinette. I hear already the howling of the storm which will surely overturn this ancient monarchy; but I must try at least to save the Queen herself, and I know how interested you are in her, and feel sure you will not withhold a helping hand because the task is so arduous."

So wrote Baron Simolin, and a few days later Renira started for Paris; the old diplomatist knew her well.

Simolin felt strongly that the Royal Family must be got out of France at any cost, it was the only hope of saving their lives; but the failure of the first attempt, and the general feeling of suspicion it had awakened, made every scheme for flight doubly difficult—nay, almost impracticable.

The first important step was to place some thoroughly reliable person near the Queen, through whom Simolin could keep up constant communication with Marie Antoinette. It was almost a repetition of the plan pursued twenty years before in Copenhagen by Sir Robert Keith, but far more difficult to carry out, for such a person must awake no suspicion in the agents and spies of the Revolution. No one must imagine that Renira even knew the Russian Ambassador. It seemed a perfectly impossible plan, and yet by intrigue and money Simolin carried his point Renira was appointed to a place in the Queen's wardrobe, and had a small room assigned her in the Tuileries for her residence. As Renira had been appointed by powerful friends of the revolutionary party, bought over by Simolin, the Queen was careful to treat her with great coldness in the presence of other people; but it was very different when they were alone. Marie Antoinette soon saw what a treasure she possessed in Renira. She loved her pale,

quiet face, and showed her a liking which in a few weeks had become a real friendship, and Renira attached herself with all the devotion of her noble nature to the lovely Queen, whose courage augmented with danger, and developed the more as she realized the calamities with which she was threatened.

Nothing could exceed the ease and cleverness with which Simolin contrived to conceal his interviews with Renira. They met frequently, but never twice at the same place ; at every meeting a fresh rendezvous was chosen. Simolin never wore the same clothes twice, and Renira always managed to assume a different appearance, and thus for a long time she avoided all suspicion. By the end of the year 1791, Renira and Simolin were fully persuaded that it would be impossible to arrange for the flight of the whole Royal Family, and they now directed their energies towards devising a plan for saving the Queen with her son the Dauphin. But the noble Queen declared that her place was by her husband's side, and that

nothing should persuade her to quit her post.

Renira found it impossible to convince Simolin that the Queen's determination was unalterable; he always returned to the argument that the Queen, whose life was in most danger, was bound to fly either alone or with the Dauphin. It is possible that Simolin himself knew that all efforts were in vain, but he was bound to make them in obedience to the commands sent him from St. Petersburg. On that January day when we found Renira seated at her piano in the Tuileries, she had arranged an interview with Baron Simolin—a very important interview, for Marie Antoinette had at last acceded to the earnest wish of the Russian Ambassador to receive him at a private audience, in which he was resolved to press upon her the duty of immediate flight.

The hour for the interview approached. Renira looked frequently at the old-fashioned watch, the token of her unknown mother's affection; but though

she saw the time, she continued to play and sing. She felt that she must sing away a peculiar feeling of anxiety, amounting almost to fear, before she could start on her errand. After a time, finding all her efforts at calmness in vain, she rose with a sigh, shut her piano, and began to disguise herself for her expedition. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when she left the Tuileries, thickly veiled, wrapped in a fur mantle, and carrying a large muff, using a side door which led to one of the least frequented courts of the Louvre. She walked neither fast nor slow, but just as ladies of the upper classes in those days were accustomed to walk. She carefully avoided the least thing that would provoke attention.

In the upper floor of an old house in one of the many small streets which then surrounded St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the Court church of the Queen of France, lived a painter, from whom many women and girls took lessons in flower painting. The Professor, already an old man, was

of revolutionary tendencies, but he did not carry them far, as people then thought, but just far enough to be looked upon by the popular party as a good citizen; in fact, he loved old gold more than modern freedom. This man had been won over by Baron Simolin. The Queen's woman of the wardrobe took lessons from him in flower painting; that is to say, she came, changed her dress in a room which lay apart from the others, and in quite another disguise left the Professor's house by a door through the court, which opened on a back alley of a neighbouring street; she returned by the same way, changed her dress again, and returned quietly to the Tuileries. No one could doubt that she had in the meantime taken her lesson from the Professor.

This day Renira followed the usual course, and a quarter of an hour after she reached the Professor's house she left it dressed as a well-to-do citizen, enveloped in a silk roquelaure, and crossed the Pont Neuf towards the Place Maubert,

where she was to meet the Russian Ambassador, who came there, after taking still greater precautions. On the bridge two gentlemen were crossing in front of her, and Renira started a little as she heard the question, "And what do you think of the Russian Ambassador?" "Muy gentil caballero y gran sennor" (a thorough gentleman and preux chevalier), answered the other in Spanish.

"I don't care for that," said the first, in a discontented tone; "I want to know whether you consider him a clever politician." "Hombre de prudencia en y negocios graves, de animo firmo assegurado con luenga experiencia" (a prudent man in important affairs, of great resolution, and long experience), was the answer.

"Thank you for the Spanish answer about our Russian friend," said the other scornfully; "in a point of fact you are right; this old diplomate is cunning enough, and has proved himself daring enough, but his long experience shall avail him nothing here. He must go, as

sure as my name is Camille Desmoulins, for I suspect that he still has some intercourse with the Court, and we must isolate the Queen completely."

Renira could not hear any more of their conversation, gladly as she would have done so, without attracting their attention; but she did not fail to repeat all she had heard to her friend.

"I am all the more glad," said Simolin thoughtfully, "that the Queen has at last been induced to grant me an interview; for I, too, feel sure I shall not be long here. If I could only settle on the plan of escape before I go!"

As Renira left the house of the Professor, on her return to the Tuileries, it was already twilight; it was, in fact, almost too dark for one of the Professor's pupils. She was just entering the Court of the Tuileries, when a veiled figure pressed up close to her, slipped a note into her muff, and, in a low voice, said, "Take care; you look too like the citizen on the Place Maubert to day, and the man-servant last Tuesday in the Rue du Roi des Deux-

Siciles, to be able to play this dangerous game much longer without discovery." On this the form disappeared. Renira leant trembling against a post, and with difficulty kept herself from fainting. Her secret was known, for as it was true that she went as a citizen to-day to the Place Maubert, so on the last Tuesday she had disguised herself as a man-servant for her interview with Simolin in the Rue du Roi des Deux-Siciles.

The blow had almost stunned her; but she regained her self-possession as she felt the letter in her muff. She hastened to her room; the letter would explain things.

Even as she hurried on, she grew quieter; it could be no enemy who had discovered her secret; an enemy would have denounced instead of warning her. Arrived in her room, she opened the paper, which was neither addressed nor sealed, before she took off her bonnet and mantle, and read by the light of the candle she had hastily lighted, "From one long thought dead." Renira dropped

the paper, and buried her face in her hands.

She knew the writing. Hans Wappäus, her affianced husband, had written the letter. It was long before Renira was quiet enough to take up the paper and read further. The one long thought dead wrote thus: "It is no longer possible that I am mistaken; I have seen Renira Beauclerc, once my affianced bride. I thought for some time that I was mocked by a phantom, but even the phantom had such a power of attraction that I was constrained to follow it. I saw this imaginary phantom disappear in a side street, but only a few days afterwards I saw a real form which bore Renira's features disappear in a side street. For days and nights I watched, and at last discovered the truth. Renira Beauclerc has devoted herself to the service of an unhappy Queen—that is like herself; she who was once my affianced bride has not changed in the course of all these years either in mind or body. I do not know in what circumstances she now

lives who was the love of my youth, and whom I have never ceased to love; therefore I do not know if she would care, if it is even possible, that Henry Wappäus, a poor man, should see her; but I feel sure that under all circumstances she will like to hear from him. Mine has been a miserable life. When I started to find my lost love, I fell into the hands of Dutch recruiting officers, and had to serve many wretched years in Batavia. At first I thought the unknown parents of my bride had prepared this terrible fate for me; but I must declare them innocent of the charge. I know it was my height alone which attracted the attention of the kidnapper; he owned it to me when I afterwards met him. From Batavia I was sent to Surinam, whence, under more favourable circumstances, I saved enough to return to Europe, and I came here as clerk to a French merchant. I had no hopes of finding my darling again, still less of finding her still free. I only wished to see once more the place where I was born, where I passed my

happy youth, where I was blest with Renira's love. Perhaps I hoped to find near my father's grave—for he cannot still be alive—a sister or some member of my family; but the evening before the day on which I was to start for Germany, I saw what I at first took for a phantom, a man with Renira's features. I thank God for it. I stayed, and now I have the happy certainty that the dear one, once engaged to me, is still alive. I desire nothing, I ask for nothing. I have no right to the first, no courage for the second; but if Renira Beauclerc wishes to see me as an old friend of her youth, if her circumstances allow her to bestow but an hour on me, she will make one who has never ceased to think of her with strong affection, unspeakably happy. From the moment that these lines come to Renira's dear hands, I will not leave my house, Rue Richelieu, 18, for three days, so that Renira's messenger may not fail to find me. I know that her heart will not refuse me an answer!—Hans Wappaus."

The pale, middle-aged woman had read

the letter through, and her eyes sparkled, and her countenance beamed with joy, as she looked up from the paper; it came to her as a revelation. She looked brilliant with love and youth; she might at that moment have been called beautiful. Great tears fell slowly down her cheeks, her lips moved, and she folded her hands. She then extinguished her candle, and hiding her lover's letter in her dress, she crept on tip-toe out of the room, flew like a girl of sixteen down the stairs, out into the street, and with winged steps hastened to the Rue de Richelieu, to the house of her lover.

An icy north-east wind was blowing—it felt to her as the soft west winds of spring; the dirty pavement of the Paris streets was a flower-strewn carpet; through the stormy grey clouds, which covered the whole heavens, she could see the blessed stars—she had recovered her love, her youth.

Chapter V

THE STORM BREAKS

DARK clouds overspread the horizon of the French monarchy; flash on flash from the gloomy atmosphere of the Revolution threatened the lily throne. It is true no flash had yet struck it; even the severe one of June 20th, 1792, had failed. But those who were on and around the tottering throne could no longer deceive themselves; the next flash might—one of the next must strike and reduce the throne of St. Louis to a heap of ruins.

The Queen Marie Antoinette looked out into the awful night that enveloped her without faltering; she would support the throne to the last moment: the Queen would not leave the King, the mother

would not desert the inheritance of her son. A victim to her sense of duty, she had bid adieu to hope since the beginning of 1792. She prepared herself silently by prayers and tears for death, whilst the Revolution with proud uplifted head drew ever nearer to its victims.

In the last interview with the only friend left to her, the grey-haired Ambassador of the Empress Catherine—an interview contrived under great difficulties by Renira Beauclerc—she had entrusted him with her will, and sent her last greeting to her imperial brother at Vienna; and as she gave her hand in parting to her faithful adherent, she said with deep emotion, "The two Queens and their true friend Simolin." She had heard from Renira of the devotion shown by Simolin to another unfortunate Queen.

"The two Queens and their true friend Simolin." Had the old diplomatist been a knight in feudal times, he might have taken these words for his motto, and engraved them on his shield.

When Baron Simolin, at the command of his Empress, quitted Paris, he tried to induce Renira Beauclerc to leave also; but she declared her firm resolution not to desert the brave Queen in the terrible time that every one, friend and foe alike, saw to be close at hand. Baron Simolin could not remonstrate with his friend, for it was a consolation to him to know that he left one true and determined soul near the Queen whom he so much admired, and that through Renira he would keep up some sort of connection with the French Court. Perhaps the old man had not given up all hope. Might not God interpose at the very last, and save the Royal Family? But, under any circumstances, who could be more helpful to the Queen than Renira Beauclerc?

We must pass over the first meeting between our heroine and the strong, true, yet humble man, Hans Wappäus. We will not repeat all that passed between the formerly engaged and now long-parted lovers. Our readers can easily imagine the scene, for they know

Renira Beauclerc, and Hans Wappäus drew his own character distinctly enough in the letter we have already seen.

A fresh impulse, an almost youthful enthusiasm, had taken possession of Renira, and Hans Wappäus gave himself up to its vivifying and ennobling influence with his whole heart and soul. "Let us live and suffer and die for the Queen." This was the motto of this no longer young pair of lovers, who asked nothing better from life than to die together in true devotion to a great but perishing ideal. Their spring of love came in the late summer of life, their betrothal day was lighted by a setting sun; it was full of sorrow and anxiety, yet full of joy and courage—courage in suffering, joy in death.

Many happy hours were spent together in the little room over the Queen's wardrobe, and Marie Antoinette often sought and found there a few moments of rest, or yet oftener went to meet Wappäus and hear from him all that passed in the city.

The spies of the Revolution appeared to trouble themselves no longer about the subordinate attendants of the Queen: they were preparing the last great attack; there was no time to think about smaller matters. This last blow was to fall in the first days of August. All was ready: both those who were to direct the attack and the victims over whom it was to fall; no one was any longer deceived. The Jacobins with a thousand voices demanded the dethronement of the King and the destruction of the monarchy. Yet even now the friends of the royal house entreated the King to fly; two plans were laid before him, but neither of them could be carried out without bloodshed. That was the unhappy King's ruin: he could not understand that any bloodshed could produce good; he would not see that firmness, even at cost of blood, at the right moment, would have saved his people oceans of blood later.

"I will not fly," he said; and the Queen added, "Rather die here than live else-

where, like James Stuart, on the alms of others."

On August 9th, towards evening, Hans Wappäus, who had not been seen the whole day, entered the Palace, and sent the Queen word through Renira that the attack on the Tuileries was settled for that night. The faithful man had himself heard and seen everything. The sections were already made permanent, the clubs were more vehement than ever, the masses in the faubourgs were already in motion.

The King, informed by the Queen, sent for M. Mandat, the Colonel of the 4th Legion of the National Guard, who occupied the Tuileries, and asked him if he was willing and able to defend the Palace against the Jacobins and their followers.

Mandat affirmed that he could do so, and there was not the least reason to doubt his sincerity. He had formerly been an officer in the regiment of the French Guards. He had indeed joined the revolutionary party, but had no wish

to destroy the monarchy; indeed, the Parisian National Guard were mostly against a Republic, and the 4th Legion especially were generally held to be royalists. There is no doubt that Mandat would have defended the Tuileries, and successfully. He had already taken the best measures to this effect, but this was well known to the managing committee of attack, and they made him harmless. He was summoned to the Hôtel de Ville in the middle of the night, and, on arriving there, found quite different men at the head of affairs to those of a few hours before. Danton, Collot-d'Herbois, Billaud-Varennes, and Tallien were now in command; the revolutionists had possessed themselves of the Hôtel de Ville. The new council deprived Mandat of his command, and ordered him to prison; and on reaching the street he was murdered by his escort, and his body thrown into the Seine. This murder rendered all his measures for the defence of the Palace and the King useless.

After supper, there being no doubt

that an attack was imminent, the whole Royal Family remained together in the so-called Council Chamber. A few of the higher Court officials, with some ladies and some of the nobles, surrounded the doomed family; a few of the constitutional ministers and municipal employés were also present, as helpless as the royalists. A deep silence brooded over all.

About eleven the Queen took the Dauphin to bed, and Renira sat by the heir to the throne of France as he slept for the last time in the royal Palace. Hans Wappäus kept watch at the door.

At length midnight struck, and then the alarm bell of the Cordeliers began to sound, and was answered by all the bells of the city one after another. This distracting, deafening noise continued for a quarter of an hour, and then ceased suddenly, as by a common impulse, and all was perfectly still.

For the first time there was no "coucher du roi." Till the 20th of June etiquette had been vigorously maintained,

in spite of all the surrounding scenes of terror; on August 9th it was no longer thought of.

The gentlemen, wearied out, sat down on chairs and couches, or on the tables and the ground; yet even in this moment etiquette made one dying effort, and a few old functionaries of the royal house whispered appealingly, "Sir, no one sits down in the King's Council Chamber."

We think this laughable. Ah, well! one may laugh at anything in these days; but still the feeling of these faithful followers, who even in the death hour of the French monarchy could try to maintain its ancient etiquette, strikes us as touching and worthy of respect.

Two hours passed thus in deep silence; then the noisy clamour of the alarm-bells began again, and now one after another appeared a crowd of nobles, their pistols in their pockets, their swords by their sides, to defend their King. There were still nearly three hundred nobles in Paris who had the courage to die for, or with, their sovereign.

Many of these men were afterwards laughed at and abused, and were nicknamed "Knights of the Dagger," because they concealed their weapons; but had they shown them, the National Guard would not have suffered them to pass.

It was by this time known in the Palace that the sections were advancing in massive columns on the Tuileries, that they had cannon with them, and that bands of the pikemen were already mixing with the National Guard outside the Palace, and trying to entice them from their duty.

The Queen woke her children, and had them dressed, and the whole family were again together in the Council Chamber Madame Elizabeth stayed by the King, her brother; the Princess de Lamballe would not leave the side of the Queen; the royal children sat silent and perplexed by the tumult and wild noises which penetrated to the rooms of the Palace, in general so quiet.

Unfortunately there was nothing mili-

tary about the King; it was not until the Queen reminded him that he thought of visiting the guards at the different posts. The Queen, Madame Elizabeth, the Princess de Lamballe, and the two children accompanied him on the rounds.

The sight of these three noble women and the two beautiful children made a deep impression on the defenders of the Palace, and evoked in a touching manner a ray of mediæval feeling even in the midst of the triumph of modern revolutionary ideas. Each pulse beat quicker, every eye was dimmed. Some begged the Queen to touch their weapons, to assure them the victory; others said, "Let me kiss your hand, noble Queen, and then death will be sweet."

"Long live the King of our fathers!" cried the young nobles.

"Long live the King of our children!" replied the older courtiers, as they lifted the Dauphin in their arms.

Willingly would the Queen have died at this moment of enthusiastic emotion, as the last spark of loyalty glimmered

for an instant before total extinction. It was not to be.

In the great vestibule the King ordered the ladies and the children to turn back. Louis XVI. knew too well the hatred of the people against the Queen; he dared not take her to the outposts. No doubt an attack would have been made on them, and the Royal Family might have been murdered then and there. Happy would it have been for them! The King looked grave, but self-possessed; he walked on with the dignity of a brave father of a family, but his appearance had nothing in it to inspire the defenders of the Palace, though the first posts of the National Guard called out, "Vive le roi!" as he passed, and many good citizens, grenadiers of the two royally inclined battalions of the National Guard, of the section "Petits Pères" and the "Filles de St. Thomas," accompanied the King of their own accord, resolved to defend him. And it was necessary, for the further the King went the wilder were the cries of "Vive la nation!" "A bas le veto!" and

from the terrace of the Feuillants not only the most cruel imprecations and insults were hurled at the King, but the Sans-Culottes pressed down in such masses that the noblemen and officers of the Swiss Guard, who followed the sovereign with the loyal grenadiers of the National Guard, had to form a compact ring round Louis XVI., arm linked in arm, and thus they brought the King of France back to his Palace. It was for the last time; when he left it again a few hours later, it was to return no more.

It was about six o'clock in the morning, when the King, bathed in perspiration, and deeply distressed, returned to the Tuileries. For himself he feared nothing. His one anxiety was to avoid bloodshed.

The Queen placed herself by his chair, and wiped his forehead. Renira Beauclerc knelt by the royal children, and gave them a little food. The King would come to no resolution. Suddenly the leading columns of the revolutionists broke in heavy masses into the Place du Carrousel, thundering out against

the walls of Catherine de Médici's old palace, "La déchéance ou la mort" (resignation or death).

At this moment an employé of the municipality opened the door, screaming, "The people demand your resignation. Do you not hear?"

"Then let the National Assembly decree the resignation," said the Minister of Justice, who was present, in a trembling voice.

"And what then?" asked the Queen.

The Minister of Justice bowed in silence.

"Your last day is come," cried a Colonel of the National Guard, dashing into the room. "Madame, the people have the upper hand. There is a fearful massacre."

"Save the King, save my children!" the Queen implored him.

Colonel de la Chenaye shook his head in silence. Except the few royalists who would die with the King, the Royal Family were in the midst of traitors or cowards.

This Colonel, who would not die for his King, was murdered in prison a few weeks later; and such was the fate of most of these miserable defenders.

The doors opened again, this time to admit the members of the Directory of the Department of the Seine, with their floating tricolour scarfs—at their head the Procurator-General Röderer.

"Sire," he cried, "the danger is imminent. It is impossible to defend the Palace. We cannot depend on the greater part of the National Guard. The gunners have already pointed their pieces against us. There is not a moment to lose. The King can only find safety in the National Assembly, and his family can be sheltered only in the midst of the representatives of the people."

This was Röderer, the man who saved the Royal Family from immediate massacre, to bring them to the guillotine eventually.

The Queen alone, with a woman's true instinct, saw the trap that was laid for them. "What!" she exclaimed, "pring-

ing up like a lioness, "you advise us to seek shelter with our most relentless enemies? Never. I will never leave these walls. I would rather have myself nailed fast to them. Are we then so utterly forsaken?"

"Madame," answered Röderer, "I repeat that all further resistance is useless. Do you wish to see the King, your children, your Court, murdered here before your eyes?"

"Would to God I could be sacrificed for them!" said Marie Antoinette.

"But another minute, madame," insisted Röderer, "and I cannot answer for the life of the King, for the lives of your children."

The brave woman felt she dared not offer any further opposition; she kissed her children, and, drawing herself up proudly, said, "It is the last sacrifice, M. Röderer; you will answer for the person of the King, and of my son."

"Madame," replied the Procurator-General, "I can only promise to die for them, that is all."

Without, they heard the roar of the cannon; the alarm-bells sounded incessantly, mixed with the shouts of thousands and thousands of human voices; and, frozen with horror, the faithful courtiers saw the Royal Family led through the saloons and corridors of the Palace, surrounded by the members of the Directory of the Department.

It was the funeral procession of the monarchy.

"No excitement, or the King is lost!" cried Röderer to them.

"Stay behind, gentlemen," commanded the King.

"We shall soon return," added the Queen.

They were never to return.

It was nearly seven o'clock when the Royal Family left the Tuileries by the centre portal through a double file of the National Guard. Major von Bachmann, of the Swiss Guards, led the way, followed by the Prince of Poix, on whose arm the King was leaning. Immediately behind the King came the Queen, lead-

ing the Dauphin by the hand; then Madame Elizabeth, leading the little Princess, daughter of the King; then the Princess de Lamballe, Madame de Tourzel, and Prince François de la Rochefoucauld. The King looked pale and exhausted, but composed. Large tears were running down the Queen's cheeks. Madame Elizabeth showed her usual magnanimity. "All these poor people are misled," she said, pointing to the howling crowds. "I wish for their improvement, not their punishment." The Dauphin looked about him, more curious than frightened. The young Princess wept silently.

"We shall never return to the Palace," whispered the Princess de Lamballe to the Prince de la Rochefoucauld.

They were awful moments, for the National Guard began to waver, and the wild masses of people pressed nearer, screaming,—

"Death! death! down with the tyrants!"

"What wrong have I ever done to my

people?" naïvely asked Louis XVI., in his agonized grief.

It was scarcely possible to make a way through the excited masses of angry people. For more than half an hour the Royal Family was exposed to every sort of insult from the savage mob. At last the unhappy fugitives reached the Riding School, where the National Assembly then held their sittings. Thus, then, had the King found safety and the Royal Family shelter in the midst of the worthy representatives of the people, as Röderer had so generously promised—insults of every sort, disgrace, deposition, a prison, the scaffold! The hall of the National Assembly was the first step on the road to the guillotine. The flash of August 9th had at last struck, and the monarchy disappeared in its flames.

We must now return to the deserted Tuileries, where about 300 faithful nobles, 900 brave Swiss Guards, and perhaps 200 royalists of the National Guard fought the revolutionists with unheard-of valour. And they carried their point:

they drove the wild crowds back over the Place du Carrousel. Had the King only remained in the Tuileries, who shall say how the day might have ended; for the Swiss, under Courbevoie, were marching to their aid, when the King sent back word to them to quit the Palace.

They left it, brave men, true to the last command of their King, and were all, as they came out, shamefully murdered, not by the excited mob alone, but by the republican part of the Paris National Guard—a terrible blot on French history. The Tuileries were not taken on the 10th August, 1792, but the mob broke into the old Palace when it was abandoned by the National Guard, the Swiss, and the nobles. They found in it only ladies, a few old functionaries, the servants, and several wounded men.

All were murdered; every one, to the youngest kitchen-boy, shared the King's guilt, as the demagogues openly asserted; the very mirrors were broken because they had served the Queen. Women of the worst character threw themselves,

dressed in the priests' robes which they had found in the chapel, on the beds of the Queen and the Princesses. Torrents of wine were mixed with torrents of blood; corpses lay in the butts which they had dragged out of the cellars and broken open. What they could not carry off as plunder was wilfully destroyed.

Let us drop the curtain on the fearful scene.

Renira had wished to accompany the Queen when she left the Palace. She was, however, with the other ladies, rudely driven back by Röderer, and she then hurried to her little room in the wardrobe, hoping to find Hans Wappäus there. She remained there but a short time, and then returned to the Council Chamber. She felt no fear for herself, but grieved at being separated from the Queen. She was not even alarmed for her friend's safety. At the same moment that Renira approached the Council Chamber the attack began from outside—the balls broke the window panes and clattered against the iron-work and

balustrades; but with surprise and emotion our heroine saw another hero there at his post.

This was old Pallas, who had been first page of the King's chamber, even under Louis XV. When the Royal Family left the Council Chamber, the old grey-headed man had sheathed his sword and put on his hat, and he sat now, with his arms folded, on his seat by the door. He was evidently resolved to die at his post. Renira made no attempt to induce him to fly, but she gave him her hand, which he courteously and silently kissed; then he sat down again, and with folded arms awaited his death. He had not long to wait, for he was one of the first murdered by the noble soldiers of freedom, who cut off his head and stuck it up on a pike.

Renira hurried down to the Queen's rooms in the rez-de-chaussée, the bullets falling everywhere. There in the large saloon many of the ladies-in waiting and women of the Queen and Princesses were assembled. Terrified by the balls,

they had closed the shutters and lighted the candles in the chandeliers; the sickly light only increased the deathlike paleness of the distorted faces of the terrified, despairing women. They pressed round Renira, many of them gathering courage from her dauntless air.

The firing ceased, and the poor women began to hope; drums resounded through the Palace. The victims had no idea that it was the Swiss Guard marching back at the King's command. At the same moment a wild shout of triumph echoed through the Tuileries; the noble populace had found their way in. In momentary fear of death the women fell on their knees as they heard all around the brutal rejoicings of the victors, the moans of the wounded, the sighs of the dying, and from time to time the awful death-shriek of some fresh victim.

At length the doors of the saloon were torn open; the murderous band started back at the singular and touching sight of the kneeling groups of deathly pale

women. This momentary pause was seized by Renira with cool promptitude. She perceived that she had but a moment to save these women, for of herself she never thought. She stepped to the doorway, and, taking the hands of the two leading murderers, exclaimed: "Citizens, reassure these poor women, who expect to be killed; assure them that no one kills women."

"No one kills women!" repeated two or three voices, staggered by Renira's firmness.

"No one kills women!" howled the mob, half unwillingly.

"And you, citizen, are you not afraid?" asked one of the ruffians.

"I?" said Renira, in the simplest voice. "What has an old woman like me to fear?"

They laughed and paid her some compliment; but she had saved the women. She was led with them out of the Palace, protected by the mob, who repeated the cry, "No one kills women."

It is true that this cry was only

adopted by a part of the masses, for the monster Hebert was right when he said: "The guillotine has a peculiar appetite for women."

She had reached the Rue Dauphin before Renira recognised in the pikeman who guarded her and some other women out of the Palace, and who kept close to her side to protect her, her faithful Hans Wappäus. He had to speak before she knew him, for his face was entirely unrecognisable, covered as it was with blood and powder. Renira remained a few days longer in Paris, and was then obliged to think of her own safety. She was herself already suspected, and could not give either consolation or help to the Queen and Royal Family, who were close prisoners in the Temple.

"Vive la République!" they shouted through the streets of Paris.

Renira passed on foot with Hans Wappäus through the gates of the French capital; on foot they wandered for many days through the provinces of France, dressed as simple country people—the

only way of escaping from that blood-stained soil. All the large routes were carefully watched. Even on the by-paths the fugitives had to encounter many dangers, and they owed their safety to the incessant watchfulness and indefatigable activity of the faithful Wappäus.

On the third day after her return to her small house near the Schaerbäcker gate in Brussels, Renira became the wife of Hans Wappäus, to whom she had engaged herself twenty-two years before. She could no longer refuse to fulfil the wish of her humble but faithful lover, or resist the impulse of her own heart; and so in middle life Renira found the house and home she had so ardently longed for in her youth.

Chapter VI

THE MORNING DAWNS

THE refugees from Paris in the year 1792 formed, as might be expected, a large colony. Prominent among them was a Mrs. Sullivan, who, though no longer young, was still possessed of considerable beauty. Cecca Franchini, a dancer, born in Lucca, had for many years been the acknowledged mistress of Duke Karl of Würtemberg, and their two sons and a daughter had been ennobled under the name of Franquemont. Mademoiselle de Franquemont married Count d'Orsay, and was the mother of the famous Dandy, and of the Duchesse of Guiche-Grammont. When Cecca Franchini left the Court of Würtemberg, she went—for

what reason we do not know—to India, and there married an Irishman of the name of Sullivan. Mrs. Sullivan came to Paris, and her beauty and wit won her the devotion of three men of great influence and position. It is difficult to say what position the beauty held with regard to these three men; we are not obliged to believe all the reports set afloat by their political opponents. It is certain that the attachment of these three men was proof against the strongest trials, and on one side at least acquired an almost historical notoriety.

These three men were the Swedish Marshal, Count Axel Fersen; the Russian Minister, Baron Johann Matthias Simolin; and a rich Englishman, Quintin Crawford. They were all clever, gifted men, and all three devoted themselves, as faithful knights, to the service of Queen Marie Antoinette. They arranged the flight to Varennes, and its failure was not their fault. Marie Antoinette knew the worth of her three devoted adhe-

rents, and found means, even during the miserable return from Varennes to Paris, to write a note: "Do not come here; go to Brussels!" and this note was received by Quintin Crawford through the post at Calais, just as he was starting for Paris—and thus he was saved by the Queen herself.

This is one of the small traits from which one best learns the character of that noble, unfortunate Queen. In the midst of her own misery she thought of and found means to save her friend from the danger to which he was exposed for her sake. For the honour of the Queen, such traits should be preserved to posterity.

From Brussels the three friends of Mrs. Sullivan managed to keep up a correspondence with Marie Antoinette. They sent messages to her even in the Temple; no longer, indeed, messages of hope and encouragement, but expressive of their deep and sorrowful sympathy.

Renira and Wappäus were introduced

into Mrs. Sullivan's circle by Simolin, and it was here that Renira at length solved the mystery that still hung over her birth — through Quintin Crawford she learnt the name of her mother.

Quintin Crawford, through his grandmother, was connected with one of those Dutch families that came over to England with William III., and obtained large possessions and a title; and when he, like many a younger son in those days, went to India, to win a name and fortune, he was particularly recommended to the Governor of Madras, General Lord Robert Cecil, who had married an heiress belonging to his grandmother's family, and who therefore was a cousin of his own, if a very distant one. Lord Robert Cecil, a clever, energetic man, and as unscrupulous as most Englishmen at that time in power in India, paid every attention to the recommendation, treated Quintin Crawford as his cousin, and helped him so in his career that he was able to accumulate a large fortune in a short time,

and in return he became a valuable assistant to the Governor.

Crawford was very intimate with his cousin, Lady Robert Cecil, who, though no longer young, still showed great traces of her former beauty. This woman was, according to the description of her relative, a being of most peculiar mould; her character was so curious a compound of generosity and ill-humour, of pride and amiability, of good-natured levity and vulgar egoism, that it was interesting but not easy to have much to do with her. Her strange and often unbearable temperament was probably caused by the very peculiar circumstances of her life, of which, in one of her moments of careless candour, she gave a full and detailed account to Quintin Crawford and Mrs. Sullivan, whom she generally declared to be her best friend, though she occasionally treated her as her worst enemy.

Lady Robert, early left an orphan, came to Holland, and was educated there, as a rich heiress, in the house of

her uncle, who possessed the property of the Dutch branch of her family, and played a great part at the Court of the Prince of Orange. Her wonderful beauty, as well as her wealth, caused her to be much sought after; and at an early age, with the full strength of her fiery temperament, she flung herself into a vortex of amusement, and the romantic side of her character was soon touched by the silent devotion with which Prince Wilhelm attached himself to her. The Prince was young—scarcely older than herself. They were secretly married; but just as the young wife expected to become a mother, she was suddenly recalled to England by her guardian and her family, to be presented at Court. Lady Robert never knew what induced the Prince, her husband, to insist on her obeying this summons, and at the same time concealing their marriage. Was the young Prince afraid of his family, that he did not dare to proclaim his marriage? Did he listen to certain whispers, which were not without political signifi-

cance? or was the Prince simply tired of his young wife, or inclined to some fresh intrigue? She never heard. She could also never understand why she was forced by her husband to go on board a Russian frigate, to land in Portugal, and await her confinement there, and then to proceed to England. Could she not have found some hiding-place in Holland? She blindly obeyed her husband, whom she devotedly loved—she yielded to his wishes without a question She was confined on board of a daughter, who was taken from her directly she landed, and, as she believed, sent to a Portuguese convent.

She reached England at last safely. She was more beautiful than ever. No one knew of her secret marriage and the birth of her child. She saw herself surrounded with admirers, and lived in a round of amusements, in which, after a time, she almost forgot her unacknowledged husband. Her most desirable suitor was Sir Robert, at that time not yet Lord Robert Cecil—a very attractive

man. Her family ardently desired this marriage. Had it been any one else, the frivolous woman, remembering her secret marriage, would probably have dismissed her lover, and remained, as was thought, unmarried.

But Sir Robert, in his first intimate conversation with her, showed that he was acquainted with every detail of her past history; in fact, in many points he seemed to know more than the lady herself; and one day he openly told her she had been deceived by the Prince, and that her marriage would not stand in law. At length the attractive, clever man succeeded in talking over the weak woman. She gave him her hand.

A year of happiness—as far as the glitter and excitement of society can give happiness—followed. Then many slight disagreements arose between husband and wife. Lord Robert resolved to put an end to his wife's boundless extravagance; and when she endeavoured to resist, he subdued her by one word of terrible import.

This word was Bigamy.

He coolly told her she had been lawfully married to the Prince. He pretended that he had not known it at the time of his own marriage, but had discovered it later. At the same time she now learnt that her daughter was not dead, as Lord Robert had coolly assured her, but was living in a French convent.

From this moment Lady Robert was a prey to the most bitter pangs of sorrow and remorse, which she vainly endeavoured to stifle in an incessant round of society and amusement. She found excitement, but neither rest nor consolation. These circumstances fully accounted for the unhappy woman's variable temper. Lord Robert had, however, attained his end. He had made his wife perfectly submissive. She never ventured to assert her own will as against his.

It is not very clear what was the further aim of the crafty, unprincipled man. Lady Robert could not say whether he had expected to reap political or other advantages from Prince Wilhelm.

Probably not; for the secret marriage of Prince, still a minor, with a lady not of princely birth, and still a minor, would not be binding, and was of no political importance. There was, therefore, no idea of bigamy. The word was only used to subdue the unhappy woman. But it is possible that Lord Robert had some plan of his own for the daughter of the Prince, as was shown by his sending her to the Court of the German Princess, by his determined opposition to her marriage with Hans Wappäus, his bringing her to England, and then sending her to Copenhagen. It is, however, possible that he was acting here, as from the first, as an agent of Prince Wilhelm. But this was a dark point on which neither Lady Robert nor those who listened to her story could throw any light. When Lord Robert Cecil, after the death of Queen Caroline Matilda, was made Governor of Madras, he appears to have troubled himself no further about Renira. The watch and hair chain had been sent by Lady Robert,

with his permission. Lord Robert Cec
died at Madras in the summer of 178
and his wife, Renira's mother, *died eithe*
just before or just after him. Neithe
Mrs. Sullivan nor Quintin Crawfor
were then at Madras. As Lady Rober
had never mentioned the name of he
daughter, Crawford would never hav
thought of the pale, quiet woman, wh
was now called Renira Wappäus, as hi
relative, had not Baron Simolin entruste
his friend with her history.

And thus at last Renira discovere
who was her mother, and learnt ho
miserable her life had been.

Baron Simolin said one day to her
"When I look at the friends round m
here, whom I used to meet in Paris,
feel as if I had been at some great fête
and were now watching the cold, gre
morning light shining into the deserte
ball-room; it makes me shiver."

Renira felt much the same when sh
learnt the fate of her unhappy mother
she thought of an empty ball-room in th
grey of morning, and it made her shiver.

Our tale is at an end. Baron Simolin was made Minister of Justice by his Empress, and died at Vienna, where he had gone to deliver up the will of the unfortunate Queen. He had failed in his attempts to save her, as he had failed with Caroline Matilda! Count Axel Fersen, the Swedish Marshal, the most powerful nobleman in the north, was cruelly murdered by a mob at Stockholm, in the open street; the murderers were in the pay of certain mean souls, for whom Count Fersen was too good.

In the old Schaerbecke Churchyard at Brussels, only a few years ago, you might have seen, between two cedars, a polished stone, on which were two names in gold letters: Hans, 1813; Renira, 1823. She outlived him ten years.

Butler & Tanner, Frome and London

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 31 October, 2019